

Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism

Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations: Guidelines and Regulations

Ph.D. candidates are required to pass **two qualifying examinations** before proceeding to the doctoral dissertation. One of these is a written examination (**Core Examination**) in interdisciplinary theory. The second is an oral examination (**Field Examination**) based on a written text (of 20-25 pages), a 2-page synopsis, and a bibliography assembled by the candidate in an area of interdisciplinary theory defined in consultation with the supervisor and the second reader.

Qualifying examinations are to be completed during the second year of study. Students must declare their intention to take the examination by **August 31** of their first year (Term 3).

General

1. The **Core Examination** is to be taken during a designated week in **early February** (Term 5). Candidates have until **May 15** (Term 6) to submit the **Field Study**, and until **June** to have the **Thesis Proposal** approved.
2. Candidates are required to **declare by August 31** (end of Term 3) their intention to take the core examination in February. Candidates are also required to declare their intention to take the Field Examination by August 31. This should be done in writing (including by e-mail) to the Program Coordinator.
3. Any request for an exception to these regulations because of special circumstances (e.g., because of illness) must be put in writing and approved by the Graduate Committee.

The Core Examination. A qualifying examination in an area of concentration established by the Centre faculty for all students, to be taken during a designated week in early February. This consists of a written examination based on a reading list of 50 books or equivalents (chapters/articles). The exam is assigned both a Pass/Fail and a numeric grade, the latter to be recorded only internally within the CSTC. At the Centre, 70% is considered a passing grade, and grades of 86% and over carry the designation "With Distinction." The student is notified of the results of the exam by the Chair of the examining committee. A candidate may fail and retake the Core Examination once (at the next opportunity, one term later). A candidate who fails the Core Examination a second time will be required to withdraw from the program.

1. Candidates will have two sittings of 4 hours each, two days apart, in which to write this examination. This format recognizes the scope and diverse range of the materials covered. No books are allowed in the examination room, however, candidates may bring written notes into the room (see below).
2. During the first sitting candidates will be required to answer eight (8) out of twelve (12) questions based on terms/passages drawn from the list of 50 texts (or equivalent). These will be short answer questions.

3. During the second sitting, candidates will be required to answer three (3) out of a choice of five (5) longer, synthetic questions. These will be longer essay-type answers and questions will be sent, via email, one week in advance. Candidates may bring up to three sheets of written notes into the room (one per question).
4. The resources allowed will be a computer with MS-Word (provided by the program, and without internet access). Candidates may opt to hand write.
5. The examining committee will consist of three examiners, elected by the Centre faculty to serve on a rotating basis. One of these will act as chair. Normally the chair and at least one of the other two examiners will be members of the core faculty of the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism with full FGS doctoral supervisory privileges.
6. The questions asked in the examination should provide reasonable coverage and depth of the wide and diverse range of materials on the Core reading list. To ensure that the candidates and examiners have a common understanding of what constitutes “reasonable coverage” and “reasonable breadth”, candidates are required to meet with the examining committee in order to discuss the examination and how to prepare for it. This meeting should take place within the time scale outlined below.
7. A candidate may fail and retake once (at the next opportunity, one term later) the Core Examination. A candidate who fails the Core Examination a second time will be required to withdraw from the program.

Summary of Schedule - Core Exam:

Step 1

Date by which candidate must declare intention to take examination

Year I, August 31

Step 2

Date by which the candidate must meet with chair of examining committee

Year II, November 15

Step 3

Core Examination to be taken during designated week

Year II, early February

The Field Examination. A qualifying examination in an area of interdisciplinary theory that is individually tailored. The examining committee consists of the supervisor, second reader, and a third person chosen by the Director in consultation with the supervisor and student. The examination consists of an oral examination of the Ph.D. candidate. As part of this examination, candidates prepare and submit a 20–25 page text called the “**Field Study**,” based on a list of 25 texts (over and above any texts drawn from the Core Examination list), selected in consultation with the supervisor and second reader. The written component of this examination consists of the Field Study, its Bibliography of 25 works, and a 2 page synopsis. The written component of this examination must be submitted **no less than two weeks prior** to the oral examination. The examination is assigned a Pass/Fail. Candidates have until **May 15** of their second year to submit the Field Study, with the oral examination to occur within 2–3 weeks of submission. A candidate may fail and retake this examination once. A candidate who passes the Core Examination but fails the Field Examination twice will be required to withdraw from the program.

The Field Study bears a close relationship to the dissertation and can be thought of as something like a potential introduction to it, though it may in practice be significantly modified in the process of writing the dissertation. A short, 4–5 page **Thesis Proposal** will be due 2 weeks after the Field Examination. This document may incorporate the 2-page synopsis, appropriately modified in the light of discussion, but must also contain a chapter or section outline. The student must discuss the proposal with his/her committee prior to submitting it to the Graduate Studies Committee. Final approval of the Thesis Proposal by the Graduate Studies Committee will be understood as the Program’s approval for the candidate to proceed with the proposed dissertation project.

The objective of this examination is to help Ph.D. candidates define the field within which they plan to develop a thesis project. The purpose is not, therefore, to offer a literature review but rather to stake out, and defend, a terrain that will frame the thesis. Overall, the text and the bibliography should represent four months of work.

1. The examining committee will consist of three examiners, one of whom will be a neutral member appointed by the Director. One of the three examiners will normally be the candidate’s expected dissertation supervisor. The second examiner will normally be the second reader of the candidate’s expected dissertation committee.
2. A candidate may fail and retake this examination once. A candidate who passes the Core Examination but fails the Field Examination twice will be required to withdraw from the program.

Summary of Schedule - Field Exam and Thesis Proposal:

Step 1

Date by which candidate must declare intention to take examination

Year I, August 31

Step 2

Date by which candidate must submit Field Study.

Year II, May 15

Step 3

Examination date, normally 2–3 weeks after submission.

To be determined by candidate in consultation with the examining committee

Step 4

Date by which candidate must communicate examination date to Program Coordinator

Six (6) weeks before
Proposed examination date

Step 5

Date by which Thesis Proposal must be submitted to and discussed with supervisory committee

Year II, June
(2 weeks after Field Examination)