



Northeastern University

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

DIRECTIONS FOR DOCTORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PLAN FORM

Overview of the Comprehensive Exam

The Doctoral Comprehensive Exam serves two primary purposes: to provide students with in depth knowledge of particular fields, and to orient students toward work on their dissertation. The Comprehensive Exam Approval Form is intended to lay out the shape of the student's intended research plan, identify a committee, and receive feedback from the GSC.

The student initiates the Comprehensive Examination process by selecting a committee chair and forming an examining committee. The examining committee will normally consist of three professors—the committee chair and two additional committee members—from the Department of English.

The Comprehensive Examination consists of:

- One reading list with a rationale and approximately 40-50 entries for each exam
- Three Field and Focus Papers, each supervised by one member of the examination committee
- A two-hour oral examination covering the three papers and the student's possible dissertation/future research in which all three members of the committee participate
- A one- to two-page cover letter explaining to the committee how the three fields relate to the student's research, teaching, and professional goals

For a more detailed description of the Comprehensive Exam, please see the PhD Guide, located on the English Department's [Graduate Student Resources page](#).

Completing the Comprehensive Exam Approval Form

Students should meet individually with faculty members they are interested in working with to confer about the length and structure of the reading list, the topic of the field and focus paper, and how the paper will feed into the dissertation or the student's preparation for teaching or the job market. After each meeting, the student should fill out this form with the details. *Once the form is complete, the student should share the form with all anticipated committee members for review.*

After all committee members approve with signatures, the student should send the form to the GSC for final approval by April 10th.

If the members for the committee changes at any point during the student's time in Comprehensive Exams, the student must inform the Graduate Program Coordinator in order to update paperwork.

Reminder: the Comprehensive Exam must be completed and passed within 12 months of finishing coursework for the student to remain in good standing in the program.



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GRADUATE PROGRAMS – COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PLAN

① File this form with the Graduate Programs Office, email gradenglish@northeastern.edu

Student: _____

Exam Chair: _____

Exam Committee Members: _____

FIELD AND FOCUS PAPER #1

Title: _____

Advisor: _____ **Due Date:** _____

Describe in 300-500 words the field and focus of this paper, and state how the paper will either contribute to the development of the dissertation or towards future teaching and other research. Please include scholars or suggested readings you will be researching.

FIELD AND FOCUS PAPER #2

Title: _____

Advisor: _____ **Due Date:** _____

Describe in 300-500 words the field and focus of this paper, and state how the paper will either contribute to the development of the dissertation or towards future teaching and other research. Please include scholars or suggested readings you will be researching.

FIELD AND FOCUS PAPER #3

Title: _____

Advisor: _____

Due Date: _____

Describe in 300-500 words the field and focus of this paper, and state how the paper will either contribute to the development of the dissertation or towards future teaching and other research. Please include scholars or suggested readings you will be researching.

Intended Area and Topic of Dissertation

Briefly describe what field you expect to write your dissertation in, with which faculty members, and on what topic. You are not wedded to this dissertation plan, but having a dissertation in mind will help you orient yourself in the Comprehensive Exam.

ORAL EXAMINATION

Anticipated Exam Date (Month, Year): _____

Student Signature

Date

Committee Chair Signature

Date

Graduate Program Director Signature

Date

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