Ph.D. Program Review

&

Candidacy Examination Procedures

Language and Literacy Studies

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2009

Rev. 04/09
Ph.D. Program Review & Candidacy Examination Procedures
Language and Literacy Studies
(effective Fall, 2009)

Contents

First Review 1
  Purpose and Procedure ................................................................. 3
  Portfolio Contents ........................................................................ 3
  Possible Outcomes ......................................................................... 4

Mid-Program Review ..................................................................... 5
  Purpose and Procedure ................................................................ 5
  Portfolio Contents ........................................................................ 5
  Possible Outcomes ......................................................................... 6

Candidacy Examination .................................................................. 7
  Purpose .......................................................................................... 7
  Candidacy Examination Committee Constituency ....................... 7
  Components of the Candidacy Examination ............................... 7
  Description of Examination Components .................................. 7
    Comprehensive Examination (Part 1) .......................................... 6
    Specialization Examination (Part 2) ........................................... 8
    Oral Defense (Part 3) .................................................................. 8
  Scheduling ..................................................................................... 8
  Evaluating the Candidacy Examination ..................................... 9
  Review Criteria ............................................................................ 9
  Procedures ................................................................................... 10
  Decisions ....................................................................................... 10
  Reporting Procedures ................................................................ 10

Rev. 04/09
Preparing for Language and Literacy Portfolio Reviews

The language and literacy portfolio reviews are checkpoints designed to help you and the faculty to be sure your collected work shows evidence that you are on track to successfully complete the program and that you are prepared to teach at the university level, conduct independent research, and meet your personal career goals. The first review is held in the semester after you have completed 12 to 18 hours, and the mid-program review after 27 to 36 hours. The adviser will send out a notice about the review schedule (if you don’t receive a message, please contact the adviser). It is ultimately your responsibility to sign up for reviews in a timely fashion. For each review, you will prepare a portfolio. See the descriptions below, and use previous student materials as a guide. (They are in the 334 suite.) Arrange a meeting with the adviser for advice on preparing your portfolio. Turn in your materials at least two weeks before the review. You should have two copies—one for the third floor and one for the fourth floor.

Reviews are held twice per year—usually in November and April. The language and literacy adviser will send out a reminder to sign up for reviews each semester.

First Review

Before the first review, you should have completed: (a) 18 hours of coursework with no grade lower than a B; (b) at least one course in research methodology at The University of Texas; and (c) no more than 3 semester hours taken Credit/No Credit in the initial 18 hours.

Purpose and Procedure:

The purpose of the first review is to monitor your progress in the doctoral program and to advise you on planning your program of study. The first review is a low-stress session with the program faculty that allows them to get to know you and vice versa. You will chat informally about your academic interests, your experiences thus far, and your goals for the program and the future. We will suggest courses and experiences based on the expectations of the program combined with your personal interests. If you have not already done so, you should begin to plan ways that you can gain college teaching experience including, for example, being a teaching assistant for a language and literacy class or teaching a summer course at another college or university. Please also be thinking about ways that we can assist you as you continue in the program.

Portfolio contents

- Vita
- List of courses and professors
- Brief statement including reasons for entering the program, coursework and research experiences that have made an impression on you, teaching experiences and/or plans for gaining experience, and career goals
After the first review you will receive a letter from the advisor, reviewing the faculty response to your materials and their meeting with you. Below is the possible range of responses from the faculty.

**Possible Outcomes**

- A statement that applauds your progress so far that may also be accompanied by recommendations for future courses or suggestions about faculty in other programs from whom you might want to take courses.

- A statement that makes specific recommendations about coursework that you need to take in the near future (i.e., to start the research sequence or to enroll in a class with a specific faculty member). This statement indicates that your progress is adequate but that the faculty have specific advice about the direction of your program.

- A statement that raises questions about your progress and makes specific recommendations. This statement suggests that your progress is not considered satisfactory or that the faculty have specific concerns about your performance in the program. In this case, the C & I Graduate Adviser will be notified, and you will be asked to repeat the first review after completing the faculty’s recommendations. If the second review is not satisfactory, the faculty may recommend to the Graduate School that you be terminated from the program.
Mid-Program Review

Before the mid-program review, you should have completed between 27 and 36 hours of coursework. Use every opportunity in coursework selection to explore your areas of professional interest. That is, start to focus your work so that you can be thinking toward an area of specialization and a dissertation topic. Develop these interests by engaging in independent studies, and connect with faculty members who are doing research of interest to you (directed research).

Engage in independent research such as: (a) pursue your own ideas for extending a faculty study in which you have been involved, or plan and carry out your own study; (b) refine class papers for submission to a journal; (c) submit a proposal to a conference. Become familiar with regulations covering Research on Human Subjects. (If you conduct a study, you will need approval.) See http://www.utexas.edu/research/rse/humanresearch/

Purpose and Procedure

The purpose of the mid-program review is to monitor and evaluate your continued progress in the doctoral program. In the mid-program review, you will discuss your coursework, teaching, and research experiences with the faculty. In your portfolio and in the meeting, we will be looking for evidence that you have engaged in research beyond course requirements and that you have taken steps to move toward independence as an educator and research scholar. That means we will want to see pieces of your own writing that indicate progress in this direction. By this time, you should have begun to develop a focus for your dissertation, and we will ask you to discuss your ideas.

Portfolio contents

- Vita
- List of courses and professors
- Personal statement describing your work in the program and career goals. Include copies of syllabi that you have developed or helped to develop and descriptions of courses that you have taught or helped to teach.
- Research Statement/History in which you discuss your research experiences since you started the program. Also address what you have learned (about any or all aspects of research) and how your ideas have changed as a result of your coursework and research experiences. Include materials that illustrate your research history, along with an explanation, as well as your thoughts about the topic and methodology for your dissertation. We will be expecting to see all of the following. For each paper, include a paragraph explaining briefly why you included it:
• Explanation and write-up of research with faculty (e.g., presentation proposals and handouts, published papers)

• Independent research, such as: conference proposals and presentations, a manuscript submitted for publication, published papers (if you have them)

• Class papers that you have “taken to the next level” (i.e., refined with the help of a faculty member and submitted to a journal)

**Possible Outcomes**

After the mid-program review, you will also receive a letter from the adviser reviewing the faculty response to your materials and their meeting with you. Below is the range of possible responses from the faculty:

• A statement that applauds your progress so far that may also be accompanied by recommendations for courses and specific research experiences that will help you to prepare for you dissertation.

• A statement that makes specific recommendations about coursework that you need to take before finishing the program (i.e., a research course that focuses on the methodology you plan to use in your dissertation or a course with a specific faculty member) and/or research experiences that the faculty think are important for you to have before beginning your dissertation. This statement indicates that your progress is adequate but that the faculty have specific advice about the direction of your program.

• A statement that raises questions about your progress and recommends that you repeat the mid-program review after completing specific recommendations. This statement suggests that your progress is not considered satisfactory or that the faculty have specific concerns about your performance in the program. In this case, the C & I Graduate Adviser will be notified, and you will be asked to repeat the mid-program review after completing the faculty’s specific recommendations. If the second review is not satisfactory, the faculty may recommend that you be dismissed from the program. A dismissal recommendation will be exercised with strict adherence to the guidelines of the graduate school.
Candidacy Examination
To be admitted for candidacy for the Ph.D., students are evaluated by the Area faculty through written exams followed by a scheduled oral defense of the written exams.

Purpose

- to evaluate the student’s understanding of content important to the field of language and literacy education;

- to evaluate the student’s understanding of the processes of research related to the field of language and literacy education;

- to evaluate the student’s preparedness to conduct a dissertation study.

Candidacy Examination Committee Constituency

The Candidacy Examination committee will consist of a chairperson and four other faculty members with the following stipulations.

- The chair or one of two co-chairs must be from the Language and Literacy Program Area.
- A minimum of three members of the committee must be representative of the Language and Literacy Program Area.
- One member of the committee must be from another department (and may be from another institution).

The Candidacy Examination committee need not to be the student’s Dissertation Committee.

Components of the Candidacy Examination

The Candidacy Examination for the Language and Literacy Program Area is divided into three parts. Part 1 is a Comprehensive Exam; Part 2 is the Specialization Exam; and Part 3 is the student’s understanding of the breadth of the field of education. The Specialization Exam is within language and literacy. The oral examination is designed to give the student the opportunity to expand on his/her thinking and give the faculty an opportunity to explore more fully the concepts presented.

Description of Examination Components

The written Candidacy examinations will consist of two parts: Part 1) the Comprehensive Examination related to broad knowledge of Language and Literacy Education Studies which will not exceed four honors; and Part 2) the Specialization Examination, related more specifically to the student’s areas of expertise, interest, and research which will not exceed four hours.
Comprehensive Examination (Part 1)
The Comprehensive Exam will be prepared by the student’s candidacy committee. The examination will consist of at least two questions for four different areas. The student must respond to at least one of the questions from each of the areas (i.e., a total of four written answers) The areas are as follows:

- Cultural Foundations
- Research
- Curriculum Theory
- Learning Theory

Specialization Examination (Part 2)
The Specialization Exam will be prepared by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee. Each member of the Committee will submit one question to the designated chair of the student’s committee. The student will respond to four of the five questions during the allotted time. The question not addressed by the student will be discussed during the Oral Defense.

Oral Defense (Part 3)
The Oral Defense is a two-hour oral examination conducted by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee and open to any additional readers of the examination who have interest in the student’s performance. It is expected that the entire written examination serve as the basis for the oral defense.

Scheduling

When a student has completed nearly all of his or her coursework (or during the semester prior to the completion of all coursework), the student is ready to schedule the Candidacy Examination. The student will take the Comprehensive Exam for Language and Literacy Studies first. The written examination will not exceed four hours. The Specialization Exam can be scheduled by the student at any time following the completion of the Comprehensive exam, but the entire examination process must be completed within three months. The graduate coordinator will administer the exam. However, it is recommended that the student take two written exams (i.e., the Comprehensive and the Specialization exams) on two consecutive days. The Oral Defense (two hours) over the written work will be conducted within three weeks after the student’s writing of the Specialization Exam. The Oral Defense will be conducted by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee. Scheduling of the Oral Defense is done with the chairperson and members of the student’s Candidacy Examination committee.
Procedures

Paperwork and procedures discussed below should be completed before September 15 for the fall semester, or before March 1 for the spring semester.

Step 1: When students are ready to begin their candidacy examinations, they should choose the Candidacy Examination Committee which will supervise them through the three parts of the exam. Refer to the attached sheets for information about selecting Candidacy and Dissertation Committee members. (NOTE: Because a smooth transition from Candidacy Examination Committee to Dissertation Committee is desirable, the Graduate Adviser recommends that as students choose members for the Candidacy Examination Committee, they should bear in mind requirements for membership on the Dissertation Committee).

Step 2: When students have secured agreement of five faculty members to serve on the Candidacy Examination Committee, they pick up from the Graduate Coordinator in Education Building 406 the following two forms: 1) Intent to Take C & I Doctoral Candidacy Exam, and 2) Program of Work. The Intent form asks for a listing of the names of the Candidacy Examinations Committee members. The Program of Work form, which follows the guidelines of Language and Literacy Studies, is to be completed by typing or word processing. Both the Intent form and the Program of Work should be returned to the Graduate Coordinator before qualifying exams.

Step 3: The Graduate Coordinator will then send a memo appointing the Candidacy Exam Committee and issuing a call for questions, along with a copy of the student’s Program of Work. The Graduate Coordinator will oversee the Comprehensive Examination process.

Evaluating the Candidacy Examinations

The written Candidacy Examination (Parts 1 and 2) will be read and evaluated by the Candidacy Examination Committee, who will be asked to judge the adequacy of the student’s written answers. The Candidacy Examination Committee will also conduct the oral examination. Any faculty member is welcome to attend any students Oral Defense.

Review Criteria

The faculty will make a separate evaluation of performance on the Comprehensive and the Specialization exam. Once the student’s Oral Defense is completed, the committee will discuss the student’s performance on the Written Exam and the Oral Defense. The committee will vote whether a student passes, passes with conditions, or fails the candidacy exam.
Decisions

A decision to pass the student on both the Comprehensive and Specialization Exams, and the Oral Defense means the student will be allowed to advance to candidacy.

A decision to pass with conditions means the student will be allowed to advance to candidacy as soon as specified conditions are met. The imposition of these conditions is intended to help the student strengthen possible areas that are of concern to the faculty (e.g., additional research coursework, additional involvement in research projects, additional courses in content areas). The Candidacy Examination Committee chair is usually responsible for monitoring student work on the conditions set.

A decision to fail will carry the recommendation that the student be dropped from the program or that the student retake either or both parts of the Candidacy Examination. In the case of a recommendation to redo, the student will be given specific suggestions on how to strengthen areas of weakness.

Reporting Procedures

A student is told following the Oral Defense whether he or she is being recommended for advancement to candidacy without conditions, advancement with conditions, asked to retake the examination in total or in part, or dropped from the program. One retake is permitted according to Graduate Studies Committee policy.

The Candidacy Committee Chair then reports results of deliberation to the Graduate Adviser’s office. When the student is recommended for advancement to candidacy, the Graduate Studies Committee in C & I votes on the recommendation. The C & I Graduate Coordinator will then notify the student of the results and guide the preparation and submission of candidacy papers.