Ph.D. Program Review

&

Candidacy Examination Procedures

Language and Literacy Studies

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas at Austin
# Ph.D. Program Review & Candidacy Examination Procedures

**Language and Literacy Studies**  
(effective Spring 2016)

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Preparing for Language and Literacy Program Reviews

The Language and Literacy studies (LLS) program reviews are checkpoints designed to help you and the faculty ensure 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 process begins with a New Student Conference that will be scheduled at the end of the first semester of coursework in the doctoral program, and is required of all first year LLS doctoral students. The First Review will be scheduled for no earlier than one year, and no later than one year and one long semester, from the initial New Student Conference. The Second/Mid-Program Review will be scheduled for no earlier than one year, and no later than one year and one long semester, from the First Year Review. The student, at the point of the Mid-Program review, should have at least two semesters of coursework remaining. The purpose for the First and Mid-Program reviews is to assess the student’s progress in coursework and the student’s involvement in ongoing research activity, teaching, and other professional activities related to their doctoral studies and career goals. For each review, students will prepare a portfolio (For the New Student Conference, students will prepare a briefer set of materials to help guide the conversation with the faculty). See the descriptions below, and use previous student materials as a guide. (Examples of portfolios are in the 334 suite, and you may also ask more advanced students for physical or electronic copies of their portfolios.) Arrange a meeting with your assigned LLS faculty adviser for advice on preparing for each review and your portfolio. You should turn in a draft of your review materials to your assigned LLS faculty adviser at least three weeks before the date of the review. Your adviser will provide you with feedback. Turn in your final materials in electronic form to your faculty adviser at least one week before the review. Your adviser will forward your materials to the LLS faculty. You should also prepare one hardcopy and place it in the 334 office suite (on the table beneath the mailboxes). Reviews are held twice per year. The LLS program’s graduate adviser will send out a notice to students about the reviews schedule each semester (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.

New Student Conference with the Language and Literacy Faculty

The New Student Conference will occur at the end of the first semester of coursework in the doctoral program, and is required of all first year students.

Purpose and Procedure
The purpose of the New Student Conference [the word ‘review’ is almost too formal to describe it] is for each student to meet face-to-face with all LLS faculty at a scheduled time so as to a) discuss the student’s goals within the program and to take a status check on the first semester; b) explain faculty goals for all students’ involvement in research; and c) clarify expectations in both directions. Students scheduled for this conference should meet with their assigned LLS faculty advisor and prepare the following materials:
Portfolio Contents

- Vita
- A list of current courses and professors, and those planned for the upcoming semester
- A brief statement of purpose (goals for studying in this program), and burgeoning curiosities/research interests that intrigue
- A brief statement of participation in Doctoral Seminar

Outcomes

The faculty and student will come to know each other better. The student will have an opportunity to share their experiences thus far in the program, ask questions, receive advice on coursework, and be introduced to various research, teaching, and other professional opportunities in the program.

First Review

This review will be scheduled for no earlier than one year and no later than one year and one long semester from the New Student Conference. First Reviews are scheduled for the month of October. 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; (c) at least one course with a Language and Literacy faculty member; and (d) no more than 3 semester hours taken Credit/No Credit in the initial 18 hours.

Purpose and Procedure

The purpose for this review is to assess the student’s progress in coursework and in ongoing research and teaching activity. At this review, you will talk about your academic interests, your research and teaching experiences thus far, and your goals for the program and the future. Since this is an oral review, we expect students to be able to articulate clearly their purposes, interests, and learning in subject matter. You should be able to discuss theorists, researchers, ideas, and topics across language and literacy and other coursework areas that have become important in you thinking so far. The faculty will suggest courses and experiences based on the expectations of the program combined with your personal interests. If you are currently enrolled as a part-time student, we will discuss with you a strategic plan for a residency of at least one year. During the semesters leading up to the First Review, you should take research methods coursework and become involved in research activity, such as through working on faculty research projects or undertaking independent studies or directed research under faculty supervision. You should also seek out ways to 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.
Portfolio Contents

- Vita
- List of courses and professors enrolled with thus far and those planned for the upcoming semester
- Revised statement of purpose for entering the program with a discussion of coursework, research, teaching, and other experiences that have contributed to your learning, thinking, and development thus far as a scholar and teacher educator, and that are advancing your career goals
- A report on research. Discuss what you have learned about any and all aspects of research, for example, from research methods courses, involvement in faculty research projects, or independent studies or directed research under faculty supervision. Discuss as well future coursework and research experiences you have planned, or those you will seek out, and how you expect those to contribute to your learning and development as a researcher.
- A report on teaching. Discuss your experiences and learning from working as a teaching assistant, course instructor, and/or university facilitator. Describe future teaching you have planned or are seeking out to advance your development as a teacher educator and career goals. Include any supplemental materials documenting your teaching—for example, copies of syllabi and learning activities/assignments you have developed or helped to develop and teach.
- A writing sample from a course
- A brief statement of participation in Doctoral Seminar

After the First Review you will receive a letter from your faculty advisor, reviewing the faculty response to their meeting with you and your materials. Below is the possible range of responses from the faculty.

Possible Outcomes

- Progressing in the program as expected. Continue in program. The faculty will applaud your progress thus far but may also recommend future coursework, research, and teaching activities and experiences that you will benefit from pursuing.
- Progressing in the program adequately but with some modifications recommended. No repeat of the First Review required. The faculty will applaud your areas of progress and make specific recommendations about coursework, research, and teaching experiences you need to have in the coming academic year. This statement indicates that your progress is adequate but that the faculty have specific advice about the direction of your program.
- Progress in the program is unsatisfactory. Significant modifications recommended that require the student repeat the First Review after s/he has met the recommendations within a time period specified by the faculty. The faculty will note areas of specific concern about your progress and performance in the program. The Graduate Adviser of the Curriculum and Instruction Department will be notified, and you will be asked to repeat the First Review after completing the faculty’s recommendations. If the second attempt at First Review is not...
satisfactory, the faculty may recommend to the Graduate School that you be terminated from the program. A dismissal recommendation will be exercised with strict adherence to the guidelines of the Graduate School.

**Second/Mid-Program Review**

This review will be scheduled for no earlier than one year and no later than one year and one long semester from the First Review. Mid-Program reviews are scheduled for the month of May. The student, at this point in their program, should have at least two semesters of coursework remaining. To participate in the Mid-Program Review, you should have completed between 27 and 36 hours of coursework.

Leading up to the Mid-Program review, 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 engaging with faculty members who are doing research of interest to you (through participating with them in their research projects as well as through doing your own directed research projects that they supervise).

**Purpose and Procedure**

The Mid-Program Review allows faculty to monitor, evaluate, and further guide your progress in the doctoral program. During the Mid-Program review, you will discuss with the faculty your coursework, teaching, and research experiences. Both in the portfolio you prepare and in the review meeting, faculty will be gathering evidence that you have engaged in research and learning beyond course requirements and have taken steps toward independence as a teacher educator and research scholar. That evidence will be drawn from a range of materials you will compile in a portfolio (see below). By the time of your Mid-Program Review, you should have begun to develop a focus for your dissertation, and will have opportunity at that meeting to discuss your ideas. Mid-Program Review is the time to show evidence of developing independence as a researcher and scholarly writer. By this point in your doctoral program, we expect that you have engaged in research-related activities, including scholarly writing. These activities will include at least some of the following: (a) contribute to work in a research team, (b) pursue your own ideas for extending a faculty study in which you have been involved, (c) plan and carry out your own study, (d) refine class papers for submission to a journal, (e) submit a proposal to a conference, (f) become familiar with regulations covering Research on Human Subjects. (If you conduct a study, you will need approval.) See [http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humanresearch/](http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humanresearch/)

**Portfolio Contents**

- Vita
- List of courses and professors enrolled with thus far and planned for the upcoming semester
• Revised statement of purpose, discussing coursework, research, teaching, and other experiences that have contributed to your learning, thinking, and development thus far as a scholar and teacher educator, and that are advancing your career goals.

• Research Statement/History. Prepare a written statement in which you discuss the progression of your research experiences since you started the program. The statement should address what you have learned about any and all aspects of research and how your ideas have changed as a result of your coursework and research experiences. The statement should provide evidence you are thinking beyond coursework and research with faculty and beginning to develop (and plan and pursue) your own research interests. Describe and explain your thoughts about the topic and methodology for your dissertation.

• Research Materials. In addition to your research statement, include documents that display developing independence as a researcher/scholar and writer. We anticipate you will submit different kinds of documents as evidence of your scholarship. For each document you include, please provide a brief description of its importance to your growth. Your document display may include such evidence as:
  
  - Conference proposals, presentations, and/or papers
  - Manuscripts (research-based or conceptual) submitted for publication or in the preparation phase
  - Published papers (if you have them)
  - IRB proposal under consideration, or accepted
  - 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)
  - For any published papers, manuscripts, conference proposals or papers on which you are co-author or co-presenter with faculty, you should explain the nature of your involvement and contributions to those pieces of work.
  - A brief statement of participation in Doctoral Seminar

Possible Outcomes

After the Mid-Program Review, you will receive a letter from your faculty adviser, summarizing the response to your materials and the review meeting. The range of possible responses from the faculty is described below:

• Progressing in the program as expected. Continue in program. The faculty will applaud your progress to date and may also make recommendations for courses and specific research experiences that may help you to prepare for your dissertation, and for teaching or other professional experiences that will advance your career goals.

• Progressing in the program adequately but with some modifications recommended. No repeat of the Mid-Program Review required. The faculty will applaud your areas of progress and make specific recommendations about coursework and research experiences you need to complete to prepare for the
dissertation or teaching or other professional experiences you should pursue to advance your career goals. This statement indicates that your progress is adequate but that the faculty have specific advice about the direction of your program.

- Progress in the program is unsatisfactory. Significant modifications recommended that require repeat of the Mid-Program review after completing the specific recommendations within a time period specified by the faculty. The faculty will note areas of specific concern about your progress and performance in the program. The Graduate Adviser of the Curriculum and Instruction Department will be notified, and you will be asked to repeat the Mid-Program review after completing the faculty’s recommendations. If the second attempt at Mid-Program review is not satisfactory, the faculty may recommend to the Graduate School that you be terminated 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.

**Scheduling**
The student should schedule the Candidacy Examination (Written and Oral) no longer than one semester after coursework is completed.

**Purposes**
- Evaluate the student’s understanding of theories, research, and instructional practices pertinent to the field of language and literacy education; and
- Evaluate the student’s understanding of the processes of research related to the field of language and literacy education.

**Candidacy Examination Committee Constituency**
The Candidacy Examination committee will consist of a chairperson (Chair) and two other faculty members with the following stipulations.

- The Chair must be a faculty member in the Language and Literacy Program Area. The student selects the Chair for their exam committee soon after the successful completion of the second/mid-program review.
- The Area Coordinator will assign the other two members of the committee. This assignment will be determined based on a rotation of faculty to committees. The Chair will initiate this process by requesting the assignment of the two additional committee members. The Chair will report to the student the names of the committee members.
When students have received notice of the three faculty members serving 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.

**Components of the Candidacy Examination**

The Candidacy Examination for the Language and Literacy Program Area is designed to assess the student’s understanding of the field of language and literacy education. The Oral Defense 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 in the student’s written exam.

**A. Areas of Focus**

The Exam has five major areas:

1. **Theoretical Perspectives on Literacy**: Theories commonly drawn upon to understand literacy and language education, for example theories of literacy and orality; mechanistic/technical-rational/autonomous perspectives of literacy, language and literacy as social practice; critical and multimodal processes of literacy; and theoretical models of reading, writing and literacies.
2. **Instruction, Curriculum, Materials, Assessment and their Contexts**: Research and theory that addresses the field’s understanding of: literacy teaching practices, including how to teach and assess literacy, select and evaluate materials, as well as construct/deconstruct curriculum with teachers inside and outside the classroom and across its forms; of historical and contemporary controversies and scholarly disagreements over approaches, methodologies and philosophies; of the sources of influence (e.g., ideologies, economics) and the impact of policy initiatives on teaching (e.g., high stakes testing; curriculum mandates).
3. **Literacy Research**: Methodologies and analytic methods commonly used in literacy research; affordances and constraints of various methodologies; critical examination of exemplars using various methodologies.
4. **The Learner**: Research and theory that addresses the field’s understandings of literacy learners; social construction of learners; constructs of identity; resources that individuals (including students) bring to reading, writing, and/or literacy events; constructs of ability and disability; race, gender, class, and other groupings.
5. **Literacy Teacher Education**: Research and theory that addresses the field’s understanding of literacy teacher preparation and the ongoing learning and professional development of literacy educators. This area may also include...
research about teacher education more broadly, but should include a focus on literacy teacher education. This area includes attention to the candidate’s work in literacy teacher preparation in our program and the research base associated with this work.

B. Preparation
The doctoral student should plan for a preparation period of study during which they will create a comprehensive list of readings that they have done in each of the five areas. These readings should include not only course readings but also readings associated with research projects and course teaching. This is intended to be an examination of a student’s knowledge in the field, not (yet) a focusing toward specialized research interests. Although the list does not have to be absolutely exhaustive, it should be comprehensive and represent the student’s broad reading.

- The student should organize the readings they have identified for each of the major areas into sub-groups/areas. A very brief rationale for these sub-groupings should be included as a preface for the listings of readings for each of the five major areas. The sub-groupings are not predetermined but must come from the student. The student may (or may not) plan meetings with their chair during this initial preparation time.

- Once the student and the Chair are comfortable with the document describing readings, the Chair will distribute that document and call together the exam committee.

- The three-person exam committee will meet to discuss the document prepared by the student that describes significant readings. The committee may (or may not) suggest some additional readings to fill out the readings list submitted by the student. In some cases the committee may ask the student to continue to develop the readings list and require that the student resubmit their materials for review. The student will resubmit the list with requested changes.

- The committee will identify the topical content of the exam questions in accordance with the lists submitted.

- No more than one month ahead of the examination, the Chair will meet with the student to describe the topical content of each question and discuss it with the student to make sure it is clear what the committee is thinking. After this meeting, it is expected that the student will prepare for the exam according to the UT honor code, on his or her own, and without further discussion of the exam’s content with faculty or other students.

- As time for the written exam draws near, the committee will draft five questions (one for each area) that are focused on the work represented by the student in the...
document, that match the topical content described to the student, and that can be answered drawing on the agreed-upon list of readings. These questions will not be shared with the student in advance of the exam.

C. Written Examination
The exam will be administered through the department’s graduate coordinator. The student will schedule the exam with the graduate coordinator, and the Chair will submit the five exam questions to the graduate coordinator prior to the exam date.

The graduate coordinator will provide the student with the exam questions and the exam will be a take home exam (one week). The student may access library and reference materials online during this period, but should not have any contact with or feedback from other graduate students, faculty or other people related to writing the exam. No one other than the student may edit the exam. UT Code of Honor applies.

The exam should be in a word document written in APA style. The references for each question should appear at the end of each of the response to that question. There is a ten-page limit (double space; not including references) for each question.

The student will submit answers to four of the five questions. The fifth question will be addressed in the Oral Defense.

The audience is the student’s Candidacy Exam Committee, but the doctoral student should also consider their writing on the topics as something that could be shared with other professionals in our field and regarded as timely, thoughtful, accurate and insightful work.

D. Oral Defense
The Oral Defense is a two-hour oral examination conducted by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee.

Evaluating the Candidacy Examinations
The written Candidacy Examination 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 Defense.

Decisions
Once the student’s Oral Defense is completed, the committee will discuss the student’s performance on the Written Exam and Oral Defense. The committee will vote whether a student passes, passes with conditions, or fails the Candidacy Examination.

There are several possible outcomes for The Candidacy Examination:
  1. Pass and proceed to dissertation (proposal)
2. Pass with Conditions  
   a. Rewrite parts or all of the written exam and submit to Committee without an oral re-examination  
   b. Rewrite parts or all of the written exam and submit to Committee with an oral re-examination  
3. Fail and discontinue from the program.

A decision to pass the student on both the Written Exam and 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 the Candidacy Examination. In the case of a recommendation to redo the exam, 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 the Department of Curriculum and Instruction votes on the recommendation. The Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Coordinator will then notify the student of the results and guide the preparation and submission of candidacy papers.