

## **Guidelines for Examiners and Chair for the Written and Oral Qualifying Examinations in Cultural Studies**

### **Committee Considerations**

The Qualifying Exam committee should consist of five members. The three members that will compose written questions are generally the three faculty members with whom the student completed 270 course work. If the student is completing a DE, a member of the DE needs to be one of the committee members. Because CST is a multi-disciplinary program, there is no specifically designated “outside member” but in constructing a committee, students should be working across several departments and programs. A University rule states that the chair of the Qualifying Exam cannot serve as the chair of the Dissertation Committee.

Even though the exam consists of three parts--the written exam, the dissertation prospectus, and the oral examination--the overall result is based on holistic evaluation of all of these elements, although in the case of a provisional pass, a student may be asked to take some part of the exam over again. Because there is no defense of the dissertation, the qualifying exam presents the final opportunity for students to defend their proposed projects, so special care should be taken to ensure that the dissertation prospectus has been fully vetted before the student sits for the exam.

### **Timing and Logistics: Written Exam**

The chair of the exam committee and the candidate should determine the dates of the written examination and the time and date of the oral examination. This information should be determined several months before the exams. As soon as possible, the chair of the committee should contact the program coordinator to reserve the room for the oral exam, which should be scheduled for three hours.

The chair should then forward these dates and times to all of the committee members. The chair should also tell the three committee members writing exam questions that they should send the questions to the chair at least one week before the written exam begins.

These committee members should each propose four such questions. The candidate will choose to respond to two questions from each group of four, for a total of six essays over the three days of the exam.

On each of the three exam days, the chair should send via email one set of questions to the candidate by 9:00 am. (the order in which the groups of questions will be sent is to be determined by the chair and the candidate). The candidate will email two essays back to the chair by 5:00 pm and cc themselves and the Program Coordinator on each day of the exam.

Each day of the exam, the chair will send the essays to the entire committee. Only the committee member who proposed a group of questions is required to read the essays produced from that group. All of the committee members, however, should be encouraged to read all of the exams.

The three committee members who proposed questions will judge the candidate's essays. These committee members should contact the chair with their opinions about the essays at

least three days before the oral examination. No written response from the examiners is forwarded to the student. A successful essay is one that demonstrates the student's ability to enter into productive dialogue with the conversations and debates occurring in the field by responding to the examiners' questions in a manner that makes evident their familiarity with the central debates and texts of the field, as determined by their reading list, and their ability to put this scholarship into dialogue with their own project.

### **Procedures and Protocol: Oral Examination**

All of the committee members and the candidate will be in attendance at the oral exam. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair should inform everyone of the agenda for the meeting. The candidate should then be asked to leave for a few minutes, and the chair should then determine that there is a consensus of opinion regarding the written exam.

The candidate will then return to the room, and there will be a discussion of the written exam. Typically, each of the three committee members who wrote questions and then read essays about those questions will take fifteen to twenty minutes to talk to the candidate about the essays. Other committee members, of course, may contribute to these discussions.

At the end of this discussion, the chair should call for a ten minute break in the exam, and the candidate will be asked to leave the room. The committee will discuss the candidate's performance up to this point. The committee will then make arrangements for the discussion of the dissertation prospectus which will make up the second part of the exam.

The chair will call the exam back to order and ask the candidate to come back into the room. Each of the committee members will now have a chance to ask the candidate questions about the dissertation prospectus. Usually, this discussion will begin with the committee members who did not write exam questions. Each of the committee members, however, will have fifteen to twenty minutes to discuss the prospectus with the candidate.

With about 15 minutes to go in the exam, the chair should begin to close the meeting. The candidate will leave the room once again, and the committee members will discuss the candidate's performance on all aspects of the exam. When the committee reaches a decision, the candidate will be called back in, and will be told the result. The possible results are: pass, not pass, or provisional pass (the candidate must take some part of the exam over again). A pass with distinction, is not an available official option, but the candidate can be told informally if it was an exceptionally well-executed exam.

### **Filing the Results**

The chair will need to file this result, and the names of the committee members in attendance, on a form entitled "Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy – Plan B." This form needs to be signed by the student and the chair of the qualifying exam committee. This document requires that the student have three member PhD Thesis Committee in place. The dissertation committee must include two members from the affiliated faculty of the Cultural Studies Graduate Group at UC Davis and, if the student is participating in a designated emphasis program, one member of the committee must be an affiliated faculty members on the committee as well. The student must then have the form signed by the graduate advisor, and filed with the Cultural Studies program coordinator before being submitted to Graduate Studies for "Advancement to Candidacy."