Timeline for Thesis Proposals, Reading Lists and Special Field Exams

**PhD Year 1 / PhDU Year 2**

March/April  
Associate Director, PhD holds a meeting to discuss the Comprehensive Exam as well as the process of choosing a Supervisor, drafting the Thesis Proposal, setting up a Supervisory Committee, and planning ahead for the Special Field Exam.

Spring/Summer  
You should consult widely with faculty members regarding your ideas for the thesis.

**Year 2 (Year 3 for Direct Admit students)**

Sept/Oct  
You should establish who your supervisor will be by asking appropriate faculty members if they are interested in supervising. You should also be consulting with your proposed supervisor and other faculty members as you draft your plans of study for SSHRC/OGS applications. (If you already hold a SSHRC award or equivalent, you should be drafting a thesis proposal of approximately 1-2 pages—about the length of a SSHRC plan of study). Feel free to ask the Associate Director, PhD, and/or the Director of Graduate Studies for advice.

November 1  
**Thesis Proposal (Form A)** is due at the department. This form is used for the purposes of forming your supervisory committee and generating your reading list for the Special Field Exam. You have the option of simply using your SSHRC or OGS plan of study in order to complete this form, which requires a thesis proposal of 1-2 pages. November 1 is also the due date for your supervisor to submit the **Supervisory Report (Form B)** directly to the department. Forms are available on the Graduate English website: [http://www.english.utoronto.ca/grad/programs/phdprogram/thesis.htm](http://www.english.utoronto.ca/grad/programs/phdprogram/thesis.htm)

November  
Thesis Proposals are circulated to the Graduate Faculty. **Supervisory Committees** are set up by the Associate Director, PhD in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Any subsequent changes to the committee MUST have the written approval of the Associate Director, PhD or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Nov-Jan  
The composition of Supervisory Committees is confirmed, and faculty suggestions regarding the Thesis Proposals (if any) are forwarded to the student. The student **should meet or correspond with each member of the Supervisory Committee** well before Feb. 15 to discuss the Thesis Proposal and the Special Field Reading List.

February 15  
This is the LATEST date for submitting the **Approved Thesis Proposal and Special Field Reading List (Form C)**, signed by all members of your committee, to the Department. The form can be submitted earlier, especially for students planning on scheduling a Spring sitting of the Special Field Examination. Note that three months must elapse between submitting the list and sitting the exam.

April – June.  
**Special Field Examinations** may be taken. Note: the Graduate Administrator requires a minimum of three weeks to set up the exam. *Only in extraordinary circumstances are examinations held July-Sept.*
PhD Year 3 / PhDU Year 4

Oct - Dec  
Special Field Examinations may be taken until mid-December. Exams should not be deferred to spring of third year except for documented medical (or similar) reasons. Please do not try to schedule this examination until you have a good sense of what your TAing responsibilities for the fall semester will involve and when you will be most busy with marking. It is the responsibility of the student to identify potential dates where there are no conflicts with significant TA duties. If no suitable date can be identified, please consult with the Director of Graduate Studies early in the term.

Spring  
**All Ph.D. requirements** exclusive of the thesis (i.e., course work, language requirements, the Comprehensive Exams, and the Special Field exams) must be completed.

**Special Field Examinations**

The Special Field Examination is Janus-faced: it positions you at a threshold, looking back towards engagement with the basic landmarks in a field and forward towards your own future critical contributions. To strike a good balance between these competing aims, the exam has three basic parts. It requires 1) a written examination, which is focused on a reading list (this is a take-home exam, which you have 72 hours to complete, and in which you select two questions to answer from a list of 6); 2) a short position paper (3,000 words), which articulates your most recent thinking about your thesis topic and sets out the argument and stakes of the thesis in light of your preparation of the texts on the reading list (to be submitted, at the latest, one week after the return of the written exam and no later than one week prior to the oral exam); 3) an oral examination, approximately two hours long, which is focused in part on the written examination, in part on the position paper, and in part on the Special Field reading list as a whole, of which you should demonstrate mastery (this exam will generally be held approximately 14-17 days after the day on which you pick up the questions for your written examination).

In contrast to the list for the Comprehensive Examination, you will draw up the reading list that is the basis for the Special Field examination in consultation with your supervisor and other members of your committee.

The Special Field Examination should both prepare you for teaching and scholarly work in a particular field and facilitate the transition to writing the doctoral thesis. Accordingly, Special Field reading lists comprise sixty titles: approximately thirty field-related primary source titles (representing some of the standard points of reference in the classroom and in critical conversation); approximately twenty thesis-related primary source titles; and ten secondary titles that register the methodological, theoretical, or critical priorities of the thesis project. You should differentiate between “field” and “thesis-related” readings and indicate the total number of each set of titles.

The field that the list sets out usually involves a comprehensive survey of the literature of a particular period. More unusually, it may take the form of a broad survey of a genre. Period lists cover the literature (prose, verse, drama, fiction) produced over approximately 50-80 years. Genre lists normally cover a broader span of time, up to 300 years or so. The entire list must be given a descriptive title indicating its character and scope: for example, "English Drama before 1800, with Special Attention to Women Writers"; "Interwar American Literature, 1865-1914"; “Contemporary British Literature, 1965-2015.” Sample reading lists for the Special Field examination are available from the Graduate Administrator. The list and a rationale for it, along with an approved thesis proposal signed off on by all three members of the committee (i.e., Form C), must be submitted to the Department at least three months before the Special Field examination is taken, and before February 15th of year 2 for PhDs, year 3 for PhD Us. Both parts of the Comprehensive Examination must have been passed before the Special Field Examination is attempted. All coursework must be completed and grades submitted.

The written examination is a take-home, open-book examination. You will receive the questions for the exam from the Graduate Administrator and will have 72 hours in which to write up your answers to two of
those questions. Upon request and with sufficient notice to the Graduate Administrator (minimum 3 weeks notice), the Graduate Office will provide office space for exam-writing if you would prefer to write your exam in the Department rather than at home or in campus libraries. (Note that this will only be possible within regular department office hours, which are Mondays to Fridays from 9am to 5pm.) You will not be expected to go beyond the list to "research" your answers; nor will you be expected to attach a bibliography or include citations. There is a strictly enforced word limit for answers: the two essays that students write in response to the examination questions should not under any circumstance exceed 3,000 words each.

The position paper that registers your most recent thinking about the thesis topic is to be handed into the Graduate Administrator in electronic form (with hard copies for members of the supervisory committee to follow) at least one week prior to the oral examination. You may choose to hand in the position paper earlier than one week before the oral, and even before the beginning of the written examination. It is assumed, however, that you may wish to take advantage of the thinking you have done in preparing the written examination and make final revisions to your position paper in the interval between the written and oral examinations.

Arranging the Special Field Examination: Your supervisor, in consultation with you, will arrange a time and place for the oral part of the examination. Note that it is your responsibility to ensure that this date does not conflict with any significant TA responsibilities. The written part of the exam normally takes place 14-17 days prior to the oral examination. As specified above, your written answers and position paper should be submitted to the Graduate Administrator in electronic form; you should follow up as soon as possible with hard copies for each member of the supervisory committee. The Graduate Administrator requires a minimum of three weeks notice to setup the examination.

School of Graduate Studies Policy on Candidacy

A student who has completed all requirements for the PhD except the thesis (in other words, all course work, all language requirements, the Comprehensive Exams, and the Special Field exams) is said to have achieved “Candidacy.” This must occur before the end of the third year of the program (before the end of the fourth year for Ph.D. U. students). A student who has not completed all of the requirements except the thesis, or who does not have an approved thesis topic, supervisor, or supervisory committee, has failed to achieve candidacy, will be denied further registration, and may have enrolment in the program terminated. (See the SGS Calendar for the regulations regarding Time Limit for Completion of Program Requirements.)

Revised December 2015