### AIII.1 The following revisions are proposed for the Program: French PhD Program

**Program Code:**

**Effective:** Fall 2016

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<tr>
<td><strong>Second examination</strong></td>
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<td>The Second Examination consists of two sections: written and oral.</td>
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The written section consists of four exams in periods of French literature, chosen by the students out of the seven they must take. A minimum of one exam must be in the premodern period, defined as Middle Ages, Renaissance, and seventeenth century. A minimum of two must be in the modern period (eighteenth to twenty-first century). Two examinations must be in English and two in French. The oral section must be taken by the end of the semester following completion of 60 credits of coursework, but may be taken by 45 credits.

The orals consist of three separate questions related to the prospective dissertation. They are problem-oriented and based on reflection on both primary and critical/theoretical sources, with reading lists constituted by the candidate of at least ten works per question. Two questions will be treated in French and one in English.

AND ONE substantial (25-page) paper in the candidate’s elected field, broadly defined (e.g. medieval literature; Human rights and 21st century literature; queer theory and early modern etc.), which is NOT the presumed dissertation topic proper, addresses themes and/or problems within that field, is based on a reading list and topic prepared with at least TWO faculty members in that field, is read and graded by these two faculty members. The two written components should be taken after the first year of study at GC and before the oral component that is passed when students reach 60 credits.

The oral component consists of three separate questions related to the prospective dissertation. They are problem-oriented and based on reflection on both primary and critical/theoretical
Rationale. This is the last of the major curriculum changes implemented by the Ph.D. Program in French beginning in Fall 2015. This change was approved by the Program at the end of the Spring 2016 semester and is being submitted for approval by the GC now.

All changes, including this one to the structure of the WRITTEN portion of the Second Examination (the oral component stands as is), stem from a desire expressed by the entire Program to at once speed up candidates’ time to degree and edge closer to a situation where time spent completing benchmarks comes closer to the fellowship support they receive; AND provide a more meaningful, academically enriching and professionally useful preparation at all levels and stages of their studies. The Program is striving to alleviate the number of requirements that presently weigh on our students and delay the completion of the degree, and to reduce them to be more in line with requirements in other French doctoral programs. At this point, there are practically no leading French doctoral programs that require the number of examinations that we do.

The Ph.D. Program in French spent much of the 2015-2016 academic year engaged in intense collective reflection on whether our current benchmarks were adequate for these goals. Discussions, meetings and Program-wide surveys provided some clear answers, from students in particular: the number of requirements had to be lowered, and requirements such as the written examination had to provide a more in-depth, critically grounded, and individualized type of training, the latter aim consonant with the GC’s overall trend to encourage doctoral candidates to develop their field of expertise and thesis topic early.

As a result, the current (old) system of FOUR exams in four periods, spread over as many as four semesters that are not necessarily consecutive is found to be obsolete: it in fact encourages students to procrastinate in completing that one benchmark. Regardless of Program advocacy, students tend to take these exams one at the time, and to delay them with semester gaps, among other reasons, because they believe (incorrectly, in the Program’s perspective) that every such period-based examination must be explicitly tied to an actual course given in that period. This in effect means that, contrarily to the original intent of this examination, many students do not end up learning more through the exam about a given period than they do in the course they have to take. Further, in spite of the 48-hour lead time given with questions sent electronically, the preparation for these exam sittings remains in many cases sketchy and haphazard and the resulting written essay tends to be fairly superficial.

The NEW system at once turns its back on a notion of coverage through discrete unrelated exams and on the possibility of excessive
delays in completing the task. It sets clear guidelines for when the two components have to be completed and it focuses attention on two tasks. It abolishes the concept of passing an exam in disparate centuries or areas and instead, asks candidates to reflect in a written exam essay on the convergences, contrasts, developments, inceptions and so forth of movements, ideas, narratives and frameworks, that span several time periods across centuries or different points in a particularly active century. This new exam asks candidates to reflect critically and synthetically on questions that will matter to their teaching and to how they position themselves as Ph.Ds. in French. The issue of covering a number of periods, which remains central to the training of generalists with a view to employment, is in fact treated more satisfactorily with the current course structure which does continue to require that students complete a minimum of ONE course in each period/area.

The new system replaces the four disconnected exams with two items, the second of which is a substantial paper in their OWN FIELD. The PAPER is a multi-pronged item: it shares the possibility of taking the time to explore and develop a theme or problem with a regular term paper, but it also has the features of an examination, since it is, at the end, orally discussed with the graders. Yet, because there is constant interaction with two or more faculty mentors, it is a much more engaged and “progressive” form of examination than the standard one, in which students sit for the exam and are then graded anonymously by anonymous faculty members who simply render judgment on that one piece of writing. However, it should be stressed that the PAPER is NOT a duplicate of any component of the Specialization Review position paper or of the dissertation. The paper’s purpose is to deepen a candidate’s knowledge of a prospective field in broader terms than either the planned dissertation topic or courses taken in that field: it is specifically aimed at getting the candidate to explore and master other sub-areas within their area.

The NEW exam structure is also being introduced to the Program with great fairness. Students entering in Fall 2017 would have to follow the new system, if approved. Until then, ANY STUDENT WHO ENTERED THE PROGRAM AS OF or BEFORE FALL 2016 can either complete or elect the OLD system, regardless of how few exams that student completed to date in it. Students in the entering FALL 2016 cohort are still allowed to elect that system, although they will be encouraged to elect the new one. Further, any student who entered the Program before 2016 can elect to switch to the new system, regardless of how many written exams have already been taken in the current (old) system.