PhD in Romance Languages

Note to Internal Doctoral Applicants

Students who wish to advance to the doctoral program after completing their MA degree in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures may do so only after receiving written approval from the MA examining committee. Alternatively, candidates may not advance to the doctoral program if the examining committee determines, after the MA examination, that their degree is terminal.

Students advancing directly from the MA to the PhD program need to complete only a Change of Degree Program form, which the department submits to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Students who apply to the doctoral program one semester or more after completing their MA examinations must complete a Request to Re-enroll form and reapply to the doctoral program. They must submit a new departmental application and reference letters. They need not submit a new application to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Application and Admission Information

Admission Contact Information
143 Arts and Science
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-5039
https://romancelanguages.missouri.edu/grad/graduate-program

PhD Admission Criteria

Fall deadline: February 15
Spring deadline: October 15

- Minimum GPA: 3.0 in field of major
- Doctoral applicants must have a master’s degree.
- Minimum TOEFL scores (international applicants):
  - Internet-based test (iBT) 61 Effective July 1, 2015 must have score of 80
  - Paper-based test (PBT) 500 Effective July 1, 2015 must have score of 550

Applicants must also demonstrate adequate preparation in advanced language and literature courses. This will require their having completed at least four courses equivalent to a 4000-level course for masters applicants or a 7000 level course for doctoral applicants at the University of Missouri. At a minimum, three of these courses must be in literature. If the faculty determines a deficiency, they will require that the student complete remedial course work in literature during the first year of enrollment. The director of graduate studies will inform students of these additional requirements at the time of their admission.

Required Application Materials

Submit to the Office of Graduate Studies using the online application system:
- All required Graduate Studies documents
- Official Transcript (send to Graduate School at 210 Jesse Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211-1160)
- 10-15 page writing sample in language of desired degree program, must be uploaded to the online application
- 500-word Personal Statement, uploaded to the online application
- 3 letters of recommendation (submitted through Apply Yourself or mailed to the Romance Languages Department, 143 Arts & Science, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211)
- Résumé or CV

Note: All application forms are on the Graduate School site

Specialization

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offers four fields of specialization at the doctoral level: French Literature, Francophone Literature, Spanish Literature or Spanish American Literature.

Candidates may elect a secondary field, which entails a minimum of 9 hours of course work within another department, in consultation with their doctoral program committee. This secondary field appears on students’ plan of study, but not on their transcript. Students electing a secondary field must complete a PhD examination that will include at least one question devoted to their secondary field.

Choosing an Advisor

All graduate students in the department may choose, or the director of graduate studies will assign them, an academic advisor at the start of their first semester of graduate study. Students must choose an academic advisor by the end of their first semester of graduate study.

Qualifying Examination

All PhD candidates must complete a qualifying examination during their first year in the program to determine their fitness for doctoral study.

Exemptions

The faculty may excuse students from this requirement if those students received their MA degree from this department, earned a grade of High Pass on all sections of their MA examination, and enrolled in the PhD program the semester after fulfilling all requirements for the MA degree.

Purpose and Questions

The qualifying examination provides an opportunity for the faculty to evaluate candidates and advise their future course of study in the program. The examination consists of two questions related to the candidate’s course work during the previous and current semester: one question requires analysis of a text; the other, discussion of a general topic (e.g., a literary genre, a particular author, a critical or artistic movement, and so on). The candidate’s academic advisor delivers both questions to the candidate three days before a meeting with the examining committee.

Exam Meeting with the Committee

At this meeting, the candidate offers two oral presentations of 20-25 minutes each, based on the two questions. Following these presentations, the candidate responds to comments and questions from the examining committee. At the close of this meeting, the examining committee determines whether the candidate’s performance warrants a grade of Pass or Fail. The examining committee communicates these results to the Graduate School in writing, on a D-1 form bearing the signatures of the candidate and all members of the committee. Students who receive a failing grade must retake this examination before the end of the following semester. A second failure on this examination terminates eligibility for the PhD degree and will result in dismissal from the graduate program.
Arranging the Committee

All arrangements for the qualifying examination are the joint responsibility of the candidate and the candidate’s academic advisor. Any tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty may act as academic advisor to students during their first year of doctoral study. The academic advisor need not act as the director of that student’s PhD examination or dissertation committee.

Submitting Results

Students who earn a passing grade on their qualifying examination submit the D-1 form to the Office of Graduate Studies, communicating the results of the examination and formally naming their doctoral committee.

Plan of Study & Degree Requirements

After the qualifying exam, students and their doctoral committee meet to devise a plan of study. The doctoral committee signs and submits this plan of study with the D-2 form to the Graduate School. Students in the PhD program must complete a minimum of 72 hours of course work, which includes a maximum of 30 credit hours earned as part of their MA degree. These credit hours must include course work in language teaching methodology (FRENCH 7120/SPAN 7120 or the equivalent) and, if applicable, the candidate’s secondary field. Spanish doctoral candidates must also complete course work in Old Spanish.

Foreign Language Requirements

PhD candidates must demonstrate reading proficiency in 2 languages other than English and their language of specialization (French or Spanish). They may satisfy this requirement, at a minimum, by completing intensive beginning courses in the required languages (4070 or the equivalent) with a grade of B- or better, or by passing written examinations administered by departments at the University of Missouri offering courses in those languages. Students choosing Latin as one of their foreign languages may satisfy this requirement by completing a beginning honors class (LATIN 1100H, or the equivalent). Students also fulfill this requirement if they demonstrate proficiency by objective measures (courses, examinations) that exceed this minimum standard, as approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students must satisfy the foreign language requirement before they take their Comprehensive Examination for the PhD. Basic language courses carry no credit toward the PhD and are therefore not included in the Plan of Study.

Latin Requirements for Students of Medieval and Renaissance Literatures

Students specializing in literature of either the Middle Ages or the Renaissance - literature produced within the period from the rise of the vernacular to the end of the seventeenth century - must demonstrate reading proficiency in Latin. In doing so, they fulfill half their foreign language requirement. They demonstrate proficiency in Latin according to the standard explained in the previous paragraph: by means of a beginning Honors course (LATIN 1100H), a written examination administered by the Classics Department, or equivalents of these.

Language Requirements for Students With Secondary Field in Non-English Literature

Students pursuing a secondary field in a non-English literature different from that of their major field must complete with a final grade of B- or better at least three 7000-level courses (or the equivalent) in literature of their secondary field. Completing these courses fulfills half the foreign language requirement.

For example, a student specializing in French literature of the Romantic period may choose a secondary field of German literature of the Romantic period. That student must complete 3 courses in German literature at the 7000 level (or the equivalent). Completing these courses satisfies half the foreign language requirement.

Financial Support: Graduate Instructorships

PhD candidates normally receive 6 semesters of financial support from the university while completing their plan of study and 4 additional semesters of support after completing their PhD examination. This support will customarily take the form of a Graduate Instructorship, though it may take the form of either a Research or Teaching Assistantship.

The minimum teaching assignment for PhD candidates holding instructorships is one course during their first semester of study. Depending on staffing needs, there may be an opportunity to teach two courses per semester. Students writing their dissertation may teach an additional course. International students may never teach more than 2 courses per semester owing to visa restrictions. All PhD candidates must be registered in a minimum of 6 hours of course work each semester in which they hold an instructorship.

Students may enroll in a maximum of 6 hours per semester of 9080 (Readings) if they have completed all their course work and are preparing for their PhD exams. Students may enroll in a maximum of 12 hours of 9080 (Readings) over the course of their doctoral studies, provided this occurs within their first six semesters of financial support. After passing their PhD examination, students may retain their Instructorships if they enroll in Research (9090) for a minimum of 5 credit hours per year (2 in fall; 2 in spring; 1 in summer).

Annual Review

The faculty and course directors in both major languages meet during the fall and spring semesters to evaluate the teaching and academic performance of all graduate students. The director of graduate studies informs all students in writing of their status at the end of each semester. Students who fail to remove a grade of Incomplete will be limited to teaching one course per semester as long that grade of Incomplete remains on their academic record. This restriction applies to courses other than Research (9090).

The PhD Comprehensive Examination

Reading List, Examining Committee, and Faculty Preparing Questions

Each candidate will name a PhD Examining Committee and, as necessary, other faculty members who will prepare examination questions relating to their respective periods of expertise. The Examining Committee consists of at least 4 members; 3 members of the regular (tenured or tenure-track) faculty from the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, including the student's academic advisor, 1 outside member from a different department. All of them must belong to the graduate faculty at the University of Missouri. Beyond this minimum, candidates may name other members to the committee - recognized experts in the candidates field - from either the University of Missouri or another institution, with the approval of both the student's academic advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.
A member of the regular faculty in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures who is an expert in literature pertaining to each part of the PhD examination will prepare questions for that part. If there is only one available expert in a specific field (for example, only one regular faculty member who is an expert in Medieval literature of either France or Spain), that faculty member must prepare and grade examination questions relating to that field. If there is more than one expert available in a particular field (for example, more than one member of the regular faculty who is an expert in contemporary French literature, contemporary Spanish literature, or contemporary Spanish-American literature), the student may choose one of those faculty members to prepare and grade questions in that field.

All questions on the PhD Examination derive from a reading list that the candidate compiles with the collaboration and approval of the Doctoral Committee and all other faculty preparing questions. This list aims at both breadth and depth, but mainly depth. It should include texts of literature, criticism, and history that are indispensable for an expert in the candidate’s specialized field. Yet, in the non-specialized fields, this list should include a solid literary history of all genres in the period (drama, fiction, lyric, essay), while also including literary texts that would prove indispensable only for an undergraduate survey course that the candidate might teach on works of all periods and all genres over a span of two semesters. In other words, readings from this list should yield both a generalist and a specialist - an instructor who can both design and teach a survey course, and an expert who can produce original scholarship.

Timetable of the PhD Comprehensive Examination in French and Spanish

The candidate and the academic advisor set both the dates and the order for all parts of the Comprehensive Examination, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. The Comprehensive Examination in French or Spanish consists of a written and an oral section. The written section comprises 4 parts of 3 hours per part. Candidates complete the written examination on 4 separate days - 1 part per day - within a period of 14 days. They complete the oral examination no later than five weeks after earning a passing grade on all parts of the written examination. This allows candidates to complete the written examination at the end of the fall semester and to complete the oral examination at the start of the spring semester of the same scholastic year.

Either the Director of Graduate Studies or someone delegated by the Director of Graduate Studies will administer the written part of the PhD Examination. Only members of the department faculty of departmental staff may administer the examination.

Oral Examination

Students complete the oral examination after receiving a passing grade on all sections of the written examination. The oral examination will last 1-2 hours, part of which must be in the language of the candidate’s specialized field. The oral exam allows candidates to clarify, strengthen or amplify the answers of the written exam. Only members of the Doctoral Committee must attend the oral examination.

With permission from the Doctoral Committee, students who fail part of the written or oral examination may retake only the failed part of parts. A minimum of 14 days must elapse before a student retakes a failed part or failed parts of the examination. Two failures of the examination, in whole or in part, will terminate candidacy for the degree and result in dismissal from the program.

Prospectus

After passing both the written and oral parts of the PhD Examination, doctoral students present a prospectus of the dissertation. This presentation occurs immediately after completing and passing the oral part of the Examination. Candidates prepare the prospectus in consultation with the academic advisor and deliver it in writing at least one week before the date of the oral examination to all members of the Doctoral Committee. The Prospectus requires approval by all members of the Doctoral Committee.

The prospectus presents a working outline, with a working bibliography, of the proposed project - its topic, organization, and critical method. Just as important, the prospectus should present a line of inquiry that promises to contribute to human knowledge - a thesis, or a position that warrants defending by means of both critical analysis and empirical evidence.

Research and Dissertation

Doctoral students register in 9090 (Research) once they have passed their PhD examinations. They will need to enroll for a minimum of 2 credit hours of 9090 during the fall and spring semesters and 1 hour during the summer semester in order to complete the 12 hours of dissertation credits required for graduation. In addition, the program for the doctoral degree must be completed within five years of passing the comprehensive examination. Individual departments or area programs may stipulate a shorter time period. Doctoral students should complete all requirements for the degree, including the dissertation, within five years of passing the comprehensive examination. The Office of Graduate Studies extends this deadline in extenuating circumstances. Nonetheless, students must request additional time in writing from the director of graduate studies. Failure to show sufficient progress on the dissertation may result in dismissal from the graduate program. Students should obtain the Graduate Studies’ guidelines for thesis/dissertation writing since the dissertation must conform to the formatting and style specifications established by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Defense

Candidates and their directors schedule a formal defense of a dissertation after its acceptance by all members of the doctoral committee. This oral defense, conducted by members of the doctoral committee, is open to the public. For additional information, contact the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.