

Conducting the Oral Portion of the English MA Exam: Principles and Procedures

- The **four faculty members** who prepared and graded the student's written examination will conduct the oral examination.
- Students will be **given copies** of their work in the written examinations immediately after they finish all written portions of the exam.
- **Within two working days** of the completion of the written examination, each examiner will read the examination and file a **brief written report** with the Committee Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies. If two or more examiners provide reasons why the student should not proceed to the oral, the examining committee must decide whether to approve the student's taking the oral portion; if this approval is denied, the student is judged to have failed the exam.
- Students who fail the written portion of the exam must be **notified** by the Committee Chair as soon as possible. In giving notification of failure, the Committee Chair will offer to discuss the exam with the student, taking into account the committee members' explanatory comments.
- The oral exam will take place on the **fourth working day after completion of the written exam portions**. The committee should convene shortly before the oral to discuss its structure.
- Students and faculty should allow **90 minutes** for the Oral Portion of the Exam. The examination itself will normally last for **one hour**, during which each examiner will have an opportunity to question the candidate. Candidates will be allowed approximately **five minutes** to comment upon their own written examinations. The remaining 30 of the 90 minutes should be reserved for the preliminary discussion of the structure and procedure, for and the deliberations at the end.
- The chair of the committee, in consultation with the candidate, will determine the **sequence** in which examiners ask their questions. Examiners will restrict their questions during the oral examination largely to the fields, subjects, and readings on which they contributed questions for the written examination.
- At the conclusion of the examination the candidate will be asked to leave the room so that the examiners can deliberate briefly and in private about its outcome and their recommendations. Each committee member will report his/her **evaluation** (Pass or Fail) of the overall exam: that is, the aggregate result of the written and oral portions, and all the sections.
- The committee cannot selectively pass or fail just an aspect of the exam (any section of the exam, or the written or oral portion). The committee must by majority vote either pass or fail the candidate on the **entirety** of the exam.
- The candidate must be informed immediately thereafter about the results of the examination.

- At its discretion, a committee may designate an exceptionally strong exam as a **"High Pass."** A student who receives a "High Pass" on the exam will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies.
- The committee chair will offer to discuss the exam with a student who fails after taking the oral, taking into account the explanatory comments made by committee members on the report form and in deliberations immediately following the oral. A student who fails the exam will be allowed **one opportunity** to retake the exam.