

# **PROCEDURAL GUIDE**

## **FOR THE FIELD OF MEDIEVAL STUDIES**

(updated August 2018)

### ***APPLICATION AND ADMISSIONS PROCESS***

Applications for admission and aid should be made through the Graduate School's Web site: [www.gradschool.cornell.edu](http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu). Applications must be entered online and be completed (including payment of the registration fee) by January 15.

Candidates should take the GRE aptitude tests (verbal, quantitative, and analytical, plus the subject test in their main subject, if available), and have their GRE scores sent to Cornell by using the Cornell code 2098 when taking the exam. In addition, the university requires foreign students who are not native speakers of English to pass the TOEFL examination with scores of 20 (Writing), 15 (Listening), 20 (Reading), and 22 (Speaking). **Three** letters of recommendation (one more than required by the Graduate School), and all college (and graduate school) transcripts can be uploaded directly to the online application. A writing sample of about 20 pages on a topic that best reveals the applicant's scholarly abilities, critical acumen, and suitability for advanced medieval scholarship should also be included in the application materials. Offers of admission (with financial aid) are usually made by April 1.

The Field of Medieval Studies admits only students pursuing the Ph.D. Please address all inquiries to the Director, Medieval Studies Program, 259 Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-3201. Telephone: 607-255-8545. E-mail: [medievalst@cornell.edu](mailto:medievalst@cornell.edu). Our Web site includes a section entitled "Advice to Applicants," at <http://medievalstudies.cornell.edu/graduate>.

### ***THE PROGRAM IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES***

#### **CHARACTER OF THE PROGRAM**

The goal of the Program is to provide a constructive, innovative, and cooperative atmosphere for students and faculty who wish to work in an interdisciplinary milieu; to train students to a high level of expertise in a traditional primary field and equip them with a close knowledge of allied fields and the issues and tools of medieval studies as a whole; and to allow students and faculty mentors to conceive of new configurations and combinations of materials in and approaches to pre-modern culture. The interdisciplinary character of such pursuits is fostered by a collegial atmosphere within Medieval Studies as a whole, as well as the relations with the numerous home departments where the Field faculty and other graduate students pursuing medieval scholarship are located. Many alumni/ae in college and university posts throughout the country and beyond also testify to its attractions.

## FIRST DAYS AT CORNELL

New students should carefully study the provisions of this Procedural Guide before registration. During registration week, the Director holds a meeting to orient new students about the Program and Cornell generally, and to answer their questions about the plan of study outlined in the Procedural Guide. At registration and during the early weeks of the term, the Director and other members of the Program will on request make extra efforts to advise and assist new and continuing students. We hold a reception to welcome new students and introduce them to faculty members and continuing students. Upon arrival at Cornell, students are required to take a diagnostic placement exam in Medieval Latin; for further details, see below under Languages.

## SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Upon the student's arrival in the program, the Director may assign the student to a provisional Special Committee chair. The student should take care to get to know not only this faculty member but also others with whom he or she might like to work. Until the student chooses a Special Committee chair, the Director formally serves as the chair of record.

Students are urged to declare their Special Committee chair as soon as possible (ideally by the beginning of their second semester, or before).<sup>1</sup> By the end of his/her third semester, each student, in consultation with a declared Special Committee Chair and the Director, should choose at least two other members of the Special Committee. The three members of the Special Committee will represent the student's projected fields of concentration on which s/he will focus his/her course work up to the A Exam (see also "Fields of Concentration" below). Students are at liberty to change the composition of their Special Committee at any time during their years of study in the Program, and they should not wait until they have decided **all** of their field concentrations in order to form a Special Committee. This Special Committee is there to facilitate in all ways students' progress toward an academic career. Students can call upon their committee members for advice toward their formation as scholars and teachers, and to clarify the options students have in their programs of study and their careers. It is especially crucial in the first year to seek advice on course selection and language training.

The composition of the Special Committee may be changed at any time. Changes made after the A exam require a special petition to the Graduate School.

Students should meet with their full Special Committee regularly (generally, at least once a semester) in order to review their performance, plan their future program, and discuss any other matters relevant to their progress toward the degree.<sup>2</sup> (During the student's first year, the Director will meet with him/her, until a Special Committee chair has been designated.) Students should also maintain a dialogue with individual members of the Committee, and especially the Chair. It is each student's responsibility to instigate and maintain this continued contact.

<sup>1</sup> Students who are without a Special Committee chair halfway through their first year are at a disadvantage in certain important fellowship competitions. On choosing a Special Committee chair who will also direct the dissertation, see "Advice on Choosing a Special Committee Chair" (available on the Medieval Studies website).

<sup>2</sup> A meeting with the full Special Committee means that the student and all members of the Committee should meet together, rather than having the student consult each Committee member individually, which should routinely happen too. This allows Committee members to hear the viewpoints of other faculty and the student at the same time, and is the most efficient way for the student and his/her advisers to agree on the most effective program of study.

The student should submit in writing to the Committee any extraordinary requests about the student's program of study. When these have been approved by the Committee, the student should submit them to the Director, who will place them in the student's file. The chair, upon request, will write up minutes of a student's committee meeting for preservation in the file. In addition, students who have passed their A exams must submit directly to the Medieval Studies Administrative Assistant each February 1 the following materials: 1) a current CV; 2) the dissertation proposal as approved by the Special Committee (if the student is beyond the A exam by six months or more; see below, "Dissertation Proposals"); 3) any portion or portions of the dissertation completed or drafted. The purpose of this collection of materials is to allocate any additional fellowship opportunities that may become available for students with guaranteed support, and any additional teaching or fellowship opportunities that may become available for students beyond the 5 years of guaranteed support (see further under "Funding"). Materials may be submitted in electronic format.

The Field shares the overall Cornell belief that Special Committees should be free to do what they deem to be in students' best interests. This flexibility of the Cornell graduate programs does not, however, mean that students are entirely free to determine their own programs of study. The Graduate School sets rules and standards that establish a minimum level and speed of performance; the Field faculty members define what a degree in Medieval Studies is, and set rules for students' satisfactory progress toward it; and the Special Committee requires students to complete courses, teacher training programs, exams, or dissertation work that, in the opinion of the Committee, best serve students, both at Cornell and in their future careers. Field faculty meet annually to review students' status and progress, based on reports from the Special Committee members (see below, "Review of Continuing Students").

## **FIELDS OF CONCENTRATION**

Students are required to select at least three field areas of concentration (one major and two minor). A student's major concentration and at least one of the minor concentrations must be drawn from the list of concentrations and/or sub-fields in Medieval Studies (see Appendix 1 below); any other concentrations can be drawn from accepted concentrations in other Fields of the Graduate School. Students in doubt about whether what they want to study constitutes a "field/subfield of concentration" as recognized by Medieval Studies and the Graduate School should consult the Director.

One of the field areas must be in a different discipline or department from the major concentration. To fulfill this, students have two options, depending on whether they are specializing in literature or in another discipline:

### **TRACK 1: LITERATURE**

Students who are specializing in national literature X (Middle English, for example) would have to have at least one minor in a national literature that is not X (e.g., Old French), or in a non-literary discipline.

## TRACK 2: OTHER

Students who are specializing in a discipline other than literature are required to have at least one minor field in another discipline. (Students who have a major specialization in history could select a minor in art history, philosophy, literature, philology and linguistics, etc.)

In building broad expertise within their main discipline, students are urged to select two fields (one major, one minor) within a given national literature or a given discipline. A candidate in Old English literature doing a minor in a non-literary discipline or another national literature or language might well pursue a minor in Middle English literature or Old Norse literature. A candidate in History would probably combine his/her medieval history major with either a classical or an early modern history minor, in addition to pursuing another minor in a Medieval Studies field of concentration other than history.

## COURSES

The Medieval Studies office prepares and distributes to graduate students a list of graduate/undergraduate courses thought to be of interest to Medieval Studies students in any given term. Students are not restricted to choosing courses from this list. In planning their program of coursework, students should remember that faculty members do not offer every course every year, and that there are some terms when faculty are on leave.

Students may find that they are interested in studying a topic in which no course is currently offered or is likely to be offered at Cornell during the period of their coursework. In these cases, students may request to undertake an independent study with a faculty member. These courses should generally meet on a weekly basis; the faculty member and the student must agree at the outset about the nature of the requirements for the course (readings, writings, and exams). Each department has a separate number for registering its independent study courses, or students may register through Medieval Studies itself.

Medieval Studies students are **required** to take for a letter grade or S/U two specific courses:

- the Medieval Studies Proseminar (MEDVL 7777), usually offered every other fall semester
- a Field-approved course in Paleography, usually offered every other spring semester.

(For Latin, another general requirement of all students, see below under “Languages.”)

The number of courses to be taken in a semester is to be worked out with the student’s Special Committee, but this also depends on the nature of the courses to be taken. The norm for students on fellowship is to take three courses per semester, and for students who are teaching to take two; Special Committees may allow adjustment to this norm according to circumstances. Although there is no upper limit, students are advised not to overload their schedule, especially in their first year. Language courses (in which the work is spread evenly through the semester) count toward the total number of courses taken per semester, but not toward the 12 graduate courses required to complete the Ph.D. A graduate course is usually a 4-credit course numbered at the 6000 level or above; a graduate student is permitted to take an undergraduate course and to count this toward the graduate course requirement if s/he obtains the approval of the professor of the course who stipulates the course requirements for graduate students. Graduate students usually take courses for a letter grade; the Special Committee may permit a student a course

to take S/U.<sup>3</sup> Audited courses do not count as part of a student's course load, and do not appear on a student's external transcript. Students are expected to be enterprising in extending their areas of knowledge, and they should consult with their Special Committees about any independent readings they may need to undertake. It is assumed that students will have some time for reading and thinking beyond course assignments, and for other non-course Program activities; the duties of Special Committee chairs include helping students to avoid over-scheduling.

It is best if students complete most coursework by the midpoint of the third year, thus leaving time to study for the A Exam. As noted above, over the two or three years that students take courses, students must complete at least 12 graduate courses. If students have done graduate-level work at other universities before arriving at Cornell, the Special Committee can determine whether it wishes to waive, upon receipt of evidence, some portion of the student's Cornell graduate course work. Normally no more than three courses will be waived.

### **INCOMPLETES IN COURSES**

Course work should be completed as soon as required by the instructor, and students should be alert to the many dangers of excessive numbers of Incompletes. How many are too many? Both the Graduate School and the Field have certain stipulations concerning the completion of courses after the term in which the course was offered:

Field rules: A student has too many Incompletes if he or she has more than one after one semester, or more than two at any other point in his or her career. The majority of a graduate student's work for courses should be completed shortly after the end of the term, if not actually within the term. The graduate student's semester is often considered to end about a month after the close of the undergraduate semester, but faculty establish their own deadlines in this as in other course matters. **The Field expects students to make up all Incompletes by the time of their A Exams.** The faculty will take account of extraordinary circumstances and can make some exceptions.

Graduate School rules: Course grades of Incomplete (INC) and No Grade Reported (NGR) can be removed only within one year from the date of the end of the course in which the grade was given. After that time they become a permanent part of the transcript. A student can retake a course for a grade, which would then appear on the transcript along with the INC or NGR.

Students should realize that Incompletes – especially in their main fields of concentration – may disqualify them from fellowship competitions.

Chairs of Special Committees are expected to monitor students' progress towards the degree. The Director also reviews student transcripts on a regular basis, and will notify any graduate student who appears to be progressing less than satisfactorily toward the degree.

<sup>3</sup>Students should keep in mind, however, that taking courses in the major field S/U can work to their disadvantage. A transcript with many courses taken S/U may reflect negatively on students in fellowship competitions and, later, in the job search. Your faculty recommenders may find it hard to interpret an S/U grade.

## **RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT**

A student must spend at least six semesters in residence at Cornell in order to earn the required number of “residence units” for the Ph.D., at least two of which must be earned after the A Exam. (A minimum of two residence units is required before the M.A. is granted.) In practice, eight semesters and four summers are the minimum required for completion of the requirements for the Ph.D. in Medieval Studies. Normally, this period of study is unbroken, although it is possible to obtain a temporary leave of absence for non-academic reasons. When students need to pursue their studies away from Cornell, they may apply for study in absentia.

## **TWINNING ARRANGEMENTS**

Medieval Studies has worked out twinning arrangements with the École Nationale des Chartes in Paris and with the Central European University in Budapest, whereby our students can study abroad and their students can study at Cornell. Cornell fellowship money can be used by our students to study or to do research in Paris or Budapest.

## **LANGUAGES**

Upon arrival at Cornell, students are required to take a diagnostic placement exam in Medieval Latin as a pre-requisite to enrolment in Latin seminars and Latin paleography. Students who fail to demonstrate basic competence will be directed to enroll in the Medieval Latin Reading Group, Latin courses offered by the Department of Classics, and the Medieval Latin Reading Course (if offered).

To create, promote, and foster a shared culture of Latinitas in the Medieval Studies Program and to maintain and enrich the Program’s common standard of proficiency in Medieval Latin, all students are required to take the Program’s Latin proficiency examination. Normally, this is done in the spring semester of the second year of residence but may be done earlier, if circumstances warrant. In any case, the exam must be taken before the date of the A exam. Students who fail the examination are required take a new version of the exam as soon as feasible (normally, in the spring of the following academic year).

(Students whose primary research language is a non-European language, may, at the discretion of the special committee, and with the approval of the Director, substitute for the Latin examination a pre-A examination in the appropriate language, in which case, the procedures for assessing proficiency will be determined by the Director in consultation with the chair of the student’s special committee.)

Any student who prefers to take the Toronto Latin Level One examination – e.g., for the sake of the external credential – may do so, at personal expense. A pass on the Toronto Level One or Level Two exam satisfies the Cornell Medieval Studies Latin proficiency requirement. Doctoral students pursuing advanced study in Latin are encouraged to take the Toronto Level Two Latin examination, again at personal expense.

Students are also required to know two further languages relevant to their research. They must demonstrate proficiency in reading for research in these languages (usually modern, and never the student’s mother tongue) by a method determined by their Special Committee, no later than the end of their 5th semester; for many students in Medieval Studies, French and German are to

be required, at the discretion of the Special Committee.

## **A EXAM**

The Graduate School stipulates that graduate students must attempt the A (Admission to Candidacy) Exam by the beginning of the fourth year in order to be considered in good standing. It will not permit students who do not attempt the A Exam by this time to register. Students in Medieval Studies are also required to pass the Latin proficiency exam (see above under “Languages”) as a pre-requisite for the A Exam.

The A Exam in Medieval Studies traditionally consists of three “field exams” in the student’s major and minor fields of concentration; in rare cases, students have chosen to do a fourth field exam or have been required to do so by their Special Committees. Students choose faculty members to represent each of the field concentrations, major and minor (see Appendix 1), in which they intend to take A Exams. Preparatory work is to be agreed upon with the Special Committee as a whole, although components may be completed separately with each individual faculty member. Some students have been encouraged to begin work on the field exams while they are still doing coursework (and as early as the end of the first year), especially when they have already developed special competence in a particular area. See Appendix 2 for A Exam timetables and due dates.

The Graduate School does not consider the A Exam completed until the entire Committee meets with the student to discuss and ratify the results of each individual field exam. This oral A Exam must be announced at least a week in advance. Students must obtain a scheduling form from the Graduate School website and file it with the Graduate School. They should also announce to the Program and their fellow students the time and place of the exam at least a week ahead. (Attendance at A Exams demystifies the experience and is thus a good way to prepare for one’s own exam.) The oral A Exam with full Committee usually lasts about two hours.

Faculty members do not have standard requirements for exams in their fields, nor do they have a standard way of conducting these exams. Committees thus operate with a good deal of freedom. Students are expected to consult individual faculty members to agree with them on the detailed content of the individual exam. Some faculty have reading lists and bibliographies prepared for their fields, which they may modify to a student’s needs and wishes; others prefer to work out an individual plan of reading and research with each student. Some do not require a written exam of students who have done sufficient coursework or who have presented a conference paper in a given area, but still require an individual oral exam that precedes the meeting of the full Committee. Others require the student to write under a time limit, and still others allow students as much time as they need (subject only to any limits imposed by the Graduate School). See Appendix 2 for typical A Exam formats.

## **DISSERTATION PROPOSALS**

The Special Committee may require that the student submit at the A Exam a prospectus for a dissertation or even part of the dissertation (see Appendix 2). Students are in any event expected to meet with their Committee to discuss a dissertation prospectus within six months of completing the A Exam, and in no case later than the end of the seventh semester. The Field understands that the plans set forth in the prospectus may be modified as the candidate’s research and writing proceed; significant changes of focus and structure, however, should be approved by the Committee.

## **DISSERTATION**

The Special Committee establishes its own deadlines for completion of dissertation work. Students should stay in close touch with the members of their Special Committee at every stage of reading and writing.

An acceptable dissertation must satisfy the members of the Special Committee and meet the formal requirements of the Graduate School. Dissertations are now filed online; instructions can be found at <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/thesis-and-dissertation>.

## **B EXAM**

The B Exam is a public oral dissertation-defense to which all faculty and students in Medieval Studies are invited. Like the A Exam, the B Exam is a meeting of the student with his or her full Committee. The student must file a form scheduling the exam, which is then announced at least a week in advance. Each committee member must receive a copy of the completed dissertation at least three weeks before the date of the exam (and again before the filing of the dissertation, if revisions are required). The exam usually lasts about two hours. Committees will not normally permit a student to schedule the B Exam if they do not believe that the student will be able to pass the exam, to make any necessary revisions on the dissertation, and to submit the dissertation shortly thereafter (within 60 days).

## **REVIEW OF CONTINUING STUDENTS**

At least once each academic year, the faculty meets to review the progress of all continuing students, and make decisions about funding for the following year. In preparation for this meeting, each member of a student's Special Committee (including minor members who may not be in the field of Medieval Studies) will be asked to submit to the DGS a brief written report on the student's progress, standing, and expected goals for the coming year. The Director and the student's Special Committee will try to foresee a negative review, and notify the student in advance of the faculty meeting. Students should make every effort to make up incompletes before the review and fulfill other pertinent requirements to insure that they remain "in good standing." First-year students will be the responsibility of the Director until they choose a committee chair.

As required by the Graduate School, the special committee chair shall provide qualitative feedback to the Graduate School on student progress for each year of study, from the second year through the completion of the degree. Students, in consultation with their committee chair, are also required to complete a self-assessment, reflect on progress towards established academic goals, report on professional development activities, and identify future plans and timeline.

## **FUNDING**

Upon admission, each Ph.D. student is awarded a five-year financial support package, which is guaranteed provided the student remains in good academic standing (as defined by the Program as well as the Graduate School) and performs satisfactorily in any assistantship capacity. These five years of support typically consist of two years of Sage Fellowship and three years of Teaching Assistantships. The Program will normally endeavor to seek to supply a sixth year of funding for students who have not found jobs but are in good standing and making satisfactory progress, but the Program cannot guarantee this additional support.

Many students will seek jobs in their fifth year; some will choose to focus on seeking further support for completing the dissertation. Students in their fifth year are minimally required to apply for outside funding to be eligible for any further support by the Program (if they prefer to focus their efforts on job-seeking this requirement is waived, although those seeking jobs may well wish to apply for fellowships as well). All students are strongly encouraged to seek outside funding where possible. Most full-year external doctoral fellowships have application deadlines a year before the fellowships begin, so students should be prepared to submit such applications at the beginning of their fifth year. To that end, each student should meet with her or his special committee chair in the spring of the fourth year to discuss the application process and to identify appropriate fellowships. The Graduate School maintains a database of doctoral fellowships: <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/fellowships> .

Students must submit a copy of their fellowship application(s) to the Medieval Studies office along with their other materials for the February 1 review (see above under "Special Committee"). Their Committee and the Director will assist them in finding likely sources, whether within Cornell or beyond, and in the application process. This is especially important where the research requires travel to foreign libraries, archives, galleries, etc. Outside funding also allows Medieval Studies to stretch the Program's own discretionary funds farther, to the benefit of all students; those students who bring in external funding are therefore at an advantage when it comes to allotment of the Program's scarce resources.

## TEACHING

Students are required to teach at least one semester as part of their doctoral degree; this is part of their preparation as future teachers and scholars. Almost all of our students begin to teach during their second year. The Director will make every attempt to find teaching opportunities that are most useful to the graduate students, given the following other considerations: 1) maintaining high standards of undergraduate education, and 2) working within the limited funds available to our Program mainly from the College of Arts and Sciences and the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, but also on appropriate occasions through other Departments.

Students submit their course proposals in the early part of the spring semester (usually late February or early March), and are notified of this decision in the letter they receive regarding their funding. Students should recognize that the teaching assignment they receive is subject to change.

Most of our students teach First-Year Writing Seminars in Medieval Studies with Medieval Studies faculty from their committees supervising them as "course leaders." Students may also teach under the auspices of another Department (typically that of the discipline in which they specialize), such as English, History, or Philosophy, or they may teach language courses in the pertinent Departments. In such cases, students may be supervised by faculty members from those Departments.

All students who teach a First-Year Writing Seminar are required to participate in a funded teacher-training program. These are held over the summer (when most students take them) and during the fall semester.

All graduate student Teaching Assistants are under the supervision of faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences, who should meet with them regularly, discuss pedagogical matters

with them, and observe their classroom teaching at least once a term (preferably at least twice for first-time TAs). Faculty observers will then place in student files a confidential evaluation of the graduate students' teaching to assist the writing of recommendation letters in the job search later.

Teachers of Medieval Studies First-Year Writing Seminars are expected to submit syllabi and all course handouts to a Program file in the Medieval Studies office. These materials are available to any new instructor who wishes to look at them (and to use them as well, with appropriate acknowledgement). Past students have found sharing materials to be helpful.

### ***THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR***

The role of the Director is to call faculty and students to meetings to discuss concerns of the Program; to organize new graduate student orientation; to seek graduate student funding by negotiating with the Dean of the Graduate School, the Arts College, the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, and the Directors of Graduate Studies of other departments; to direct the graduate Admissions process and the review of continuing students; to make initial proposals for assignments of graduate fellowships and TAs, subject to final approval by the faculty of Medieval Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School; to help students seek outside funding and apply for jobs; to apportion monies where possible for Medieval Studies lectures and for graduate student conference participation and research; to insure that faculty and graduate students meet the intellectual and professional standards established by the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Field of Medieval Studies; and in general to seek to guarantee a high-quality mentoring process. In addition to his/her standard Office Hours, generally in his/her department office, appointments can be made by email to consult with the Director as a student wishes.

### ***THE PROCEDURAL GUIDE***

The Procedural Guide is distributed to all faculty members and graduate students in the Graduate Field of Medieval Studies and to any faculty members from other fields who serve as minor members on the Special Committees of Medieval Studies graduate students; it is also available on the program's website. It is reviewed periodically by the faculty of Medieval Studies in consultation with the graduate students. The provisions in it apply to all faculty and students in Medieval Studies, regardless of when they joined the Program; in some cases, however, the faculty will consider, on an individual basis, exceptions to certain policies and procedures for students who entered the Program before such policies went into effect.

***APPENDIX 1***  
**AREAS OF STUDY APPROVED BY THE PROGRAM**

**Below is the list of recognized concentrations and subfields within Medieval Studies. The student chooses one major and at least two minor concentrations. These may be taken from the concentrations recognized by the Graduate School (left hand list below) or from the subfields approved from time to time by the Program faculty (listed on the right). (Note that both students and faculty commonly talk of the student's three "fields," a major and two, or more, minors.)**

CONCENTRATIONS	SUBFIELDS
medieval archaeology	
medieval history	Medieval Chinese history Medieval British history Medieval European history Medieval Islamic history Medieval Japanese history
medieval history of art	
medieval literature	Medieval Arabic literature Medieval Chinese literature Old English literature Middle English literature Old French literature Old/Middle High German literature Medieval Hebrew literature Medieval Italian literature Medieval Japanese literature Medieval Latin literature Old Norse/Icelandic literature Medieval Provençal literature Medieval Russian literature Medieval Spanish literature
medieval philology and linguistics	Celtic philology English philology French philology Germanic philology Latin philology Romance philology Slavic philology
medieval music	
medieval philosophy	

## *APPENDIX 2*

### GUIDELINES FOR A EXAM PROCEDURES

Students typically dedicate one semester to the preparation of their special A (Admission to Candidacy) Examination. The A Exam consists of a meeting with the student's Special Committee (an oral exam), in which written work the student has prepared in advance is discussed. Students must obtain a scheduling form from the Graduate School website and file it with the Graduate School. They should also announce to the Program and their fellow students the time and place of the oral exam at least a week ahead. (Attendance at A Exam orals demystifies the experience and is thus a good way to prepare for one's own exam.) The oral A Exam with full Committee usually lasts about two hours.

The A Exam in Medieval Studies traditionally consists of three components in the student's major and minor concentrations; in rare cases, students may choose to do a fourth component or are required to do so by their Special Committees. Students choose faculty members to represent each of the concentrations in which they intend to take A Exams, preparing and completing written work in advance of the oral exam; preparatory work is to be agreed upon with the Special Committee as a whole, although components may be completed separately with each individual faculty member.

#### TIMETABLES FOR A EXAMS

Students are strongly advised to

- consult with (potential) Special Committee members **as early as possible, and no later than the 2nd semester of their 1st year**, to find out faculty's expectations for A Exams (including any prerequisites, such as coursework or languages);
- begin discussion of plans for the A Exam (both content & format) with their Special Committee as a whole **in the 1st semester of their 2nd year**;
- work out this plan in some detail with the Special Committee as a whole **in the 2nd semester of their 2nd year**.

Students are required to

- submit for approval by the Special Committee a plan for the A Exam (ca. 1 pg), specifying the areas to be covered and how the student plans to fulfill the requirements in these areas, **by May of their 2nd year**; approved plans are to be filed with the DGS as a public record of the agreed exam structure;
- demonstrate proficiency in reading for research in two languages (usually modern, and never the student's mother tongue) by a method determined by the Special Committee, **no later than the end of their 1st semester of their 3rd year**; for many students in Medieval Studies, French and German are to be required, at the discretion of the Special Committee.
- pass the Latin proficiency exam as a **pre-requisite for taking the A Exam**;
- complete preparatory written work and submit it to all members of the Special Committee **at least two weeks in advance of the oral exam date**;
- pass the oral A Exam **no later than the beginning of their 4th year**;
- submit a dissertation prospectus **within six months of completing the A Exam, and in no case later than the end of the 1st semester of their 4th year**. Plans set forth in the prospectus may be modified as the candidate's research and writing proceed; significant changes of focus and structure, however, should be approved by the Special Committee.

Special Committee chairs are required to

- announce oral A Exams publicly **at least a week in advance of the oral exam date**;

## **A EXAM FORMAT AND CONTENTS**

Faculty members do not have standard requirements for A Exams in their fields, nor do they have a standard way of conducting these exams. Committees thus operate with a good deal of freedom to customize A Exam content and format to individual students' needs. Although no exhaustive list can (or should) be made, typical examples of the work required on minor concentrations include:

- overview of the field (typically through taking a Special Committee member's survey course, or working on a set reading list provided by the Special Committee member);
- a reading list agreed upon between the student and the Special Committee member;
- research generating a customized bibliography on a specific topic, culminating in a 20-pp research paper;
- a series of short (ca. 5-10 pp) papers produced over the course of a semester, in conjunction with regular meetings with the Special Committee member;
- detailed study of a key primary source or set of sources (and the pertinent secondary literature);
- preparation of a syllabus for a projected course on a specific topic, including assigned readings and outlines of lectures, assignments, etc.;
- timed exams (e.g., a series of questions assigned, one at a time, over the course of a few weeks, allowing a week to write to each question).

Typical examples of the work required on major concentrations include:

- a dissertation prospectus (a ca. 20-pp narrative account of the projected dissertation), accompanied by a polished research paper (ca. 20-pp representative of the writing that will be required for the dissertation, potentially serving as the basis for a chapter); the prospectus and paper should not be a rough first draft but a revised piece of work, complete with bibliography and such scholarly apparatus as may be appropriate;
- coursework (usually with the Special Committee chair) designed to give the student extensive knowledge in an area of specialization, and an extended research paper (ca. 30-pp of polished writing, as above).

In the oral A Exam itself, the members of the Special Committee question the candidate on the significance and coherence of his or her topic. Students who pass the examination can expect to receive recommendations from committee members for further work on the dissertation. In the event of failure, the student may be allowed to repeat the examination once on the recommendation of the Special Committee.