

Comprehensives for Doctoral Students in the Graduate Program in Dance Studies

Background

Upon entry to the program, each doctoral student is assigned an Interim Advisor. The Interim Advisor assists the student with their course selections and provides preliminary information and advice pertaining to the Comprehensives process. Doctoral students complete five three-credit courses usually within their first two or three terms in the program. One additional course, GS/DANC 6200 Advanced Research and Dissertation Seminar, is taken in term five; the comprehensive examinations and course work are normally completed by this time.

The comprehensive examinations require the candidate to engage in written academic inquiry as well as an oral defense. The major, minor, and specific exams are written exams based on responses to questions that require students to demonstrate mastery of key discursive shifts, issues, theories and methods of the fields in which they propose to write the dissertation. The major and minor exams often take up broader concerns within their fields, whereas the specific exam is typically tailored to a subfield related to the dissertation.

Preparation for the Comprehensives

Towards the end of the second term in the program and after consultation with their interim advisor, all first year doctoral students should make an appointment with the GPD to discuss their progress to date and to consider potential committee members for the comprehensive examination: one for the major, one for the specific (inside or outside Dance), and one for the minor. The primary exam supervisor for the comprehensives committee usually will be the faculty member overseeing the major examination. At the meeting the student should be prepared to declare their major field: Dance Ethnography and Cultural Research or Dance History and Heritage Studies.

There are three parts to the comprehensives: major, specific, and minor exams. Reading lists are developed for each part of the comprehensives in collaboration with the faculty member overseeing it. The lists should cover key texts in both the major and minor fields as well as texts that link more directly to the dissertation topic's related discourses, theoretical areas, or issues of engagement.

Major Exam Preparation

- At the end of winter term or beginning of summer term, the student asks a dance graduate faculty member to supervise their major exam preparation.
- Together they collaborate on a reading list of 30-40 books and articles connected with the field chosen.
- The final reading list is submitted to the entire exam committee for their approval.
- The student prepares for the exam, reading all the texts on the list, usually over the course of the summer.
- The student proposes three possible exam questions to the entire exam committee.
- The entire exam committee, including the student, refines these questions.
- The exam, which is based on one of the three potential questions selected by the major exam supervisor, is usually written in September (term 4, fall term of PhD2).

Specific Exam Preparation

- At the end of winter term or beginning of summer term, the student asks a graduate faculty member, inside or outside Dance, to supervise their specific exam preparation.
- Together they collaborate on a reading list of 20-30 books and articles connected with the sub-field chosen, which is typically related to, but not the same as, their dissertation topic.
- The final reading list is submitted to the entire exam committee for their approval.
- The student prepares for the exam, reading all the texts on the list, usually over the course of the summer.
- The student proposes three possible exam questions to the entire exam committee.
- The entire exam committee, including the student, refines these questions.
- The exam, which is based on one of the three potential questions selected by the specific exam supervisor, is usually written in October or November (term 4, fall term of PhD2).

Minor Exam Preparation

- At the end of winter term or beginning of summer term, the student asks a dance graduate faculty member to supervise their minor exam preparation.
- Together they collaborate on a reading list of 20-30 books and articles connected with the field chosen.
- The final reading list is submitted to the entire exam committee for their approval.
- The student prepares for the exam, reading all the texts on the list, usually over the course of the summer.
- The student proposes three possible exam questions to the entire exam committee.
- The entire exam committee, including the student, refines these questions.
- The exam, which is based on one of the three potential questions selected by the minor exam supervisor, is usually written in October or November (term 4, fall term of PhD2).

Taking the Comprehensive Examinations

Major Exam

This usually will be the first exam in the series, written in September of term 4. The candidate receives notification of the question chosen by the major exam supervisor, and has one week in which to write their response of 2500 to 3000 words, double spaced. The exam is submitted to the entire exam committee.

Specific Exam

This usually will be the second or third exam in the series, written in October or November of term 4. The candidate receives notification of the question chosen by the specific exam supervisor, and has one week in which to write their response of 2500 to 3000 words, double spaced. The exam is submitted to the entire exam committee.

Minor Exam

This usually will be the second or third exam in the series, written in October or November of term 4. The candidate receives notification of the question chosen by the minor exam supervisor, and has one week in which to write their response of 2500 to 3000 words, double spaced. The exam is submitted to the entire exam committee.

Oral Examination

Typically in January, the candidate will meet with their entire comprehensive exam committee for an oral examination. The candidate has the option to make a ten-minute opening statement. There will then usually be two rounds of questions related to the work submitted for all three parts of the comprehensive exam.

Comprehensive Results

The comprehensive exam committee consists of the three faculty members who have guided the student through the three exams, with one of them assuming the role of chair for the oral exam, usually the major exam supervisor. All committee members read all three parts of the exam. The committee, through consensus, will decide if the candidate has passed each part of the exam. If consensus is not possible, the GPD and exam committee member(s) in the relevant area of expertise will make the final decision. If the committee fails the candidate on one or more parts of the examination the student must rewrite the part(s) failed within six months. The examination may be retaken one time only. If the candidate does not pass the second time the candidate will be required to withdraw from the program.

The candidate will be notified of his/her results within two weeks of completing the oral exam and within two weeks of re-submitting an exam.

After the Comprehensive Exams

Students will take GS/DANC 6200 Advanced Research and Dissertation Seminar, usually, in term five. This course is designed to generate a complete first draft of a dissertation proposal. During terms 5 and 6, students should begin building their dissertation supervisory committee, by sharing this proposal draft with potential committee members and asking them individually to serve on their committee. Once constructed, the committee develops the dissertation proposal draft further until it is ready for submission to the GPD and FGS, within five months of the completion of GS/DANC 6200.

Students may wish to consult with the GPD, their first-year supervisor, or any member of their exam committee as part of this decision making process. Students do often choose people from their exam committee for their dissertation supervisory committee, but this is not expected or assumed to be the case. Students should feel free to choose dissertation committee members as they wish, given where their work has evolved during their exam year. In addition, potential dissertation committee members may accept or decline membership in a student's dissertation supervisory committee, depending on a variety of factors.

Students have up to five months from the completion of GS/DANC 6200 to finalize their dissertation committee as well as the dissertation proposal.

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