

DOSSIER GUIDELINES

1.2b The Dossier

The dossier hearing is the culminating intellectual experience for students in the M.A. program. It is the moment when work in specific courses enters into broader debates within the department and the discipline. The dossier is composed of three papers initially written for courses taken with three different faculty members and revised in light of their presentation as a culminative work. The student selects papers that will produce a dossier that locates the student's range of intellectual projects within the disciplines of literary and cultural studies and critical theory.

In the semester prior to the proposed dossier hearing, the student selects three course papers for revision and inclusion in the dossier. Each paper must be sponsored by a different faculty member. At least two of those faculty must be from the English Department. The student asks each faculty member to sponsor the paper (typically written for that faculty member, but not always) and to serve on the dossier committee.

The student also asks one of the faculty to serve as convener. The student then works with these three faculty members to revise course papers for inclusion in the dossier.

When all three committee members have agreed to serve on the dossier committee, the student petitions the Graduate Committee to approve or deny (and resubmit) the plan for the dossier. The *Dossier Proposal Cover Sheet* requests a brief rationale for selecting three particular papers, a summary or abstract of each paper's critical and/or theoretical content; a projected date for the hearing, and the signature of the faculty convenor, who will chair the defense and also make certain that the entire dossier proposal is in order.

Students may request the Graduate Committee for a change in the composition of the dossier committee at any time prior to the submission of the completed dossier.

Under the supervision of the dossier committee, the student revises the three course papers and prepares a brief critical comment (about 4-8 pages) that introduces the dossier and that defines and critiques the intellectual project represented by these three papers. This introduction is designed as a way for the student to analyze the intellectual framework(s) governing the papers and his or her M.A. work as a whole. All dossiers are expected to conform to the current MLA style manual.

Dossier hearings may be held at any time during the semester within the following guidelines.

- a. Students may expect that the full-time faculty in the department will be available for advising and sponsorship of dossier papers within the limits of their expertise and taking into account their other commitments. Students working with a faculty member scheduled to go on leave must plan the revision and scheduling of the dossier with that future leave in mind.
- b. The students are expected to present drafts of the dossier papers early enough in the semester to allow for responses and revisions.
- c. The completed dossier is typically submitted to the committee for its approval or disapproval no later than the 9th week of classes to give the committee at least two weeks to read and respond to it.

- d. The dossier hearing must be scheduled no later than the 11th week of classes, although the hearing itself may be held any time before the end of the semester.

Dossier hearings are normally not held during the summer. If the final dossier is not acceptable to the committee and the committee refuses to schedule the oral defense, the student has one opportunity to resubmit, but only within the following two semesters.

1.2c The Dossier Hearing

The hearing, chaired by the convenor, is a conversation about the strengths, weaknesses, implications, assumptions, problems, and prospects of the work in an accepted dossier. The candidate opens the hearing with a 10-minute presentation of the dossier and the issues the candidate sees for discussion in it from which the examining committee can draw additional questions and responses. The hearing normally lasts 45 minutes to an hour.

1.2d Results of Hearing

The voting reflects the committee's judgment as to the quality and the performance of the candidate at the examination. The voting on the acceptability of the oral examination is done in executive session of the committee. The examining committee must be unanimous in its approval for the candidate to pass the examination; otherwise the dossier is not accepted.

When approved by the committee, each member records his or her approval by signing the *Dossier Form*. The committee convenor returns the *Dossier Form* to the Graduate Studies Coordinator.

The examining committee reports one of the following results:

- HIGH PASS
- PASS
- LOW PASS
- NOT PASS

A high pass is not a pre-requisite to further graduate study in the department at Ph.D. level, but an unsatisfactory performance may lead the Graduate Committee to deny a Ph.D. application or to accept it only provisionally. If a student fails the dossier hearing, he or she has one more opportunity to pass the hearing. Under certain circumstances, the second attempt may be premised on condition that the student first satisfactorily revise the dossier according to the committee's recommendations after that failed hearing.