



DEPARTMENT OF
SLAVIC
LANGUAGES AND
LITERATURES

USC DEPARTMENT of SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

GRADUATE GUIDELINES

We the faculty in the Slavic Department, as well as you the graduate students, are governed by current university rules as presented in the [USC Catalogue](#). Students will benefit greatly by reviewing the sections of the *Catalogue* entitled “[Academic and University Policies](#)” and “[Graduate School Policies and Requirements](#)” thoroughly and early in their program. The following guidelines are meant to orient you in certain university and departmental procedures, but do not replace them or exhaust all possible situations and issues. Failure to complete the procedures outlined below may jeopardize your standing in the program as well as your funding.

Explanations of the academic policies and processes at USC, copies of committee forms, and other useful advice can be found on the [website of the Graduate School](#). You will need to refer especially to the section “[Guidelines and Forms](#)” for the following:

1. Forms for Qualifying Exams and Dissertation Defenses
2. Forms for Master’s Thesis (and Exam) Committees
3. Handbook for TAs, RAs, and Assistant Lecturers
4. Parental Leave for PhD Students
5. Requests & Petitions

Under “[Thesis/Dissertation Submission](#),” you will find:

1. [Required Documents for Thesis & Dissertation Filing](#)
2. [Manuscript Formatting Guidelines](#)
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4. [Guidelines to Submission](#)

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I. Master's Degree Procedures

Course requirements

A total of 30 units are required for the MA. Required courses are:

		UNITS
SLL 500	Topics in Advanced Russian	8
SLL 501	Proseminar in Russian Literature	3
SLL 512	History of the Russian Languages	3
SLL 532	18 th -Century Russian Literature	3
SLL 546	The Russian Novel	3

Transfer Credits

It is important to resolve any questions that may remain about credit from other institutions that you wish to apply toward your USC degree. As soon as possible in your first semester, you should ask the Administrative Assistant for Slavic, Deborah Russo, to assist you with a request for transfer credit. The department will recommend to the university which courses should be applied to your program, and the Articulation department will ultimately determine which courses can apply to the 60-unit Ph.D. requirement. USC will accept up to 4 outside credits toward the M.A., and up to 30 outside credits toward the Ph.D. —i.e., the equivalent of an M.A.—but the department may decide not to accept all your transfer credits and require that you take some additional coursework.

Language Requirements

Non-native speakers of Russian must successfully complete 8 units (4 semesters) of SLL 500: Topics in Advanced Russian and pass a proficiency exam in the language. The proficiency exam must be passed before the Master's Exam may be taken and should be completed at least four weeks prior to it to allow time for a re-take if necessary.

Progress Meetings

In the Slavic Department, the faculty arranges yearly meetings with each of our graduate students. These meetings take place in the spring semester and provide a chance both to review progress and plans – including issues of funding and teaching assignments – and for you to raise concerns and suggestions to the faculty as a group. The Progress Meeting functions as a First-Year Review for new graduate students; to be permitted to continue graduate work, students must receive a satisfactory evaluation in this review.

Field Examination (Master's Exam)

A written exam based on the department's reading list, followed by an oral exam, must be successfully passed before the M.A. can be awarded. It is normally taken at the end of the semester in which M.A. course work is completed.

The student must formally inform the Director of Graduate Studies early in the semester in which they want to take the Master's degree exam. At this time students should ask the department's administrative assistant to approve their Master's courses online. Exams are normally scheduled during the exam period at the end of each semester.

The student's program of study and Master's Exam are under the direction of the departmental Graduate Committee, composed of three tenure-track faculty members. At least two of the members, including the chair, must be from the Slavic department; all must be approved by the chair of that department.

The M.A. exam covers Russian literary history from the medieval through the modern periods as well as Linguistics (history of the Russian language) and is based on material covered in courses and on the [M.A. Reading List](#). The file of previous exams available in the department may provide useful information in terms of general scope and format of the exam, but students should keep in mind that there is no such thing as a "typical" exam, and that new questions are incorporated into each new set of exams. The format of the exam is the following: 1) a written exam (4 hours); and 2) an oral exam (1 hour). The two parts are usually given on different days; progress to the oral exam is not automatic. If on the written examination the judgment of the committee is such that an oral examination cannot counterbalance a poor performance, the committee is not obliged to give an oral examination.

A student must pass both the written and oral parts in order to pass the examination. Advancement from the Master's to the Doctoral program is not automatic, and depends in part upon satisfactory completion of the M.A. exam. The decision concerning progress to the doctoral level is made at the time of the exam. Students will be informed in writing if the decision is negative. At the discretion of the faculty, a student who fails the Master's exam may be permitted to take it a second time (see the [USC Catalogue](#)).

Students are not usually expected to take extra time off to prepare for the Master's exam.

After the M.A. exam is passed, the Administrative Assistant gives the student a "Change of Program" form which is sent to the Registrar. Once that has been done, the Administrative Assistant approves the student's classes taken for the M.A. and posts (certifies) completion of M.A. requirements on the student's record in SIS.

II. Ph.D. Degree Procedures

Students pursuing the Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures are required to complete a minimum of 60 units of coursework beyond the baccalaureate. In addition to the 30 units completed toward the M.A., students are required to complete the courses listed below; to demonstrate proficiency in spoken and written Russian; to demonstrate reading knowledge of two additional languages chosen from French, German, or a second Slavic language; to pass the Qualifying Examination, which must be taken after all coursework has been completed; to complete and successfully defend a dissertation.

Course requirements

A total of 60 units are required for the Ph.D. Required courses are:

		UNITS
SLL 516	Structure of Modern Russian: Morphology	3
SLL 545	19 th -Century Russian Poetry	3
SLL 550	Russian Modernism	3
SLL 555	Soviet Literature I (1917-1953)	3
Two of the following courses (6 units):		
SLL 650	Seminar in Russian Literature	3
SLL 660	Seminar in a Single Author or Work	3
SLL 665	Seminar in Russian Culture and the Arts	3

Plus electives from SLL or relevant offerings in CSLC, COLT, ENGL, FREN, SPAN etc., as approved by the department. At least 9 of these units must be completed in SLL.

On Transfer credit – see above.

Language Exams

All language exams must be passed prior to requesting permission to take the Qualifying Exam. Plan to take your language exams at least 30 days in advance of the Qualifying Exam, leaving extra time should it prove necessary for you to re-take any of them.

A) **Two of: French, German, a second Slavic language.** Traditionally, the department has required a reading knowledge of both French and German of its Ph.D. candidates. This requirement may be satisfied by passing the exams offered by the French and German programs, given as final exams in their intensive reading courses. Students at a more advanced stage in their language study are encouraged to take an upper-level literature course taught in French or German, which will also satisfy the requirement in that language. Native speakers of French or German automatically satisfy the language requirement in their language. With departmental approval, reading knowledge of a Slavic language other than Russian may be substituted for either French or German. In that case, students are expected to take or to have taken a formal course of study in the other Slavic language, whether within our department, through our credit-exchange agreement with UCLA, or through study in the country in question.

B) Russian Language Exam. Before the Qualifying Exam may be taken, all doctoral candidates except native speakers must pass a Russian language proficiency exam to demonstrate their ability to function at a professional level in Russian, i.e., to read, write, and discuss matters related to the field comprehensibly and with firm control of Russian grammar and the relevant vocabulary. The exam consists of two parts: 1) excerpts from a scholarly text or texts, about which the student must answer written questions in Russian without the aid of a dictionary (one hour); and 2) an oral interview in Russian based on the written exam (half an hour).

To arrange to take the exam, inform the department's Language Program Coordinator, who will establish an *ad hoc* faculty committee to write and administer it. The exam should be taken at least a semester before the Qualifying Exams to allow time for a retake if necessary.

Qualifying Exam Committee

The Ph.D. Qualifying Exam Committee has the responsibility to supervise the student's program of studies and to prepare, administer, and evaluate the Qualifying Exam. This includes guiding the student in developing a dissertation proposal, which will form the basis for part of the Qualifying Exam (see below). Since the Qualifying Exam Committee is responsible for your Qualifying Exam, you will want to organize your committee and consult with its members as soon as you can so as to know how best to prepare. According to the [USC Catalogue](#), "The qualifying exam committee is composed of five members. The committee chair and at least two additional members must have an appointment in the student's program." In the Slavic Department, the chair must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, and one of the five committee members must be an "outside" member, i.e., a faculty member from USC but from outside the department.

Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies when forming a committee.

To set up your Qualifying Exam Committee, you must file an [Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam Committee form](#) at least two semesters before the Qualifying Examination. This form needs to be signed by all members of your committee, by the chair of SLL, and then gets forwarded to the Vice Dean of Dornsife for approval. Please save a copy of the Appointment of Committee form or the most recent Change of Committee form.

Approval of the Dissertation Topic

During the semester preceding the Qualifying Examination, but not later than one month before it, the doctoral candidate must submit a formal proposal for the dissertation to the Qualifying Exam Committee. This should include: a description of the proposed topic; a discussion of current scholarship on the question and the original contribution the given thesis will make; a discussion of the project's proposed methodology and materials; and a selected bibliography. Suggested length of the proposal is 10-15 pages, not including the bibliography. The Committee decides on the appropriateness of the dissertation topic for the given student and provides advice concerning questions of methodology and research strategies. The Qualifying Exam Committee may also make suggestions about who might later serve on the Ph.D. Dissertation Committee

(see below). The dissertation proposal serves as the basis for the third of the written exams taken as part of the Qualifying Examination.

If you have completed all coursework and are not otherwise registered during the semester you plan to take your Qualifying Exams, you must register for GRSC 800 which is a full-time equivalent course.

If you wish to make changes in your Qualifying Exam Committee, you need to fill out a new [Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam Committee form](#) and submit it to the department chair as soon as possible. However, any changes must be made in advance of the Qualifying Exam; changes are not permitted between the written and oral portions of the exam. Further, the committee may not be altered prior to the administration of a second exam in case of failure.

Qualifying Exam

In the Slavic Department, the Qualifying Exam is usually scheduled during the exam period at the end of the semester. It consists of three written exams and an oral exam. The written exams cover: 1) Early Russian literature and culture through 1881, plus linguistics (four hours); 2) Russian literature and culture, 1881 to the present (four hours); and 3) your dissertation proposal (three hours; see further details below). The exams will usually be scheduled two or three days apart.

The Qualifying Exam is meant to be comprehensive, that is, to survey the student's knowledge in all areas of Russian literature and culture. It is meant to test not only the student's ability to synthesize material, to discuss and apply basic ideas and issues, but also their grasp of the fundamental factual body of material covered and relevant secondary scholarship. For the purposes of this exam, this body of material is roughly defined as a combination of the works on the department's Ph.D. Reading List and those areas covered by graduate courses offered in the department. Students are encouraged to consult copies of old exams on file in the department to familiarize themselves with the format and type of questions that are asked.

The written examinations in the primary fields contain both short-answer questions and essays. Essay questions fall into the following categories: early Russian through eighteenth-century literature; linguistics (including history of Russian and contemporary morphology, phonology, etc.); eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and drama; nineteenth-century prose and drama; turn-of-the-century culture (including literature, art, aesthetics, drama, cinema, etc.); twentieth-century prose and drama; twentieth-century poetry; history of criticism and theory. The written examination on the dissertation proposal consists entirely of essay questions. Additional information and advice for study should be obtained from the Qualifying Exam Committee.

In principle the oral exam covers all the material for which you were responsible on the writings, but often focuses on questions raised by the written exams. All members of the Qualifying Exam Committee must be present and must render a judgment on the Qualifying Examination. If a member is not able to attend the oral portion in person, please ask Deborah Russo to create a Graduate School petition to allow their remote participation in the exam.

Progress to the oral exam is not automatic. If on the written examination the judgment of the committee is such that an oral examination cannot counterbalance a poor performance, the committee is not obliged to give an oral examination and the report to the Graduate School will be one of failure. A student must pass both the written and oral portions of the Qualifying Exam in order to pass the examination. It may not be reported as being passed if there is more than one dissenting vote; it may not be passed conditionally, nor be made contingent on completing additional tasks (coursework, papers, etc.). Both portions of the exam must be administered at USC. The Qualifying Exam may be retaken—once (see the relevant sections in the [Catalogue](#)), unless the Qualifying Exam Committee deems termination from the program appropriate after the first exam.

At the time of the Qualifying Exam the department will download a “Report on Ph.D. Qualifying Examination” form from the Graduate School website and present it to the committee chair prior to the examination. The committee members indicate Pass or Not Passed on the form and sign and date it; it is then passed on to the Dean’s office and Graduate School for processing.

Dissertation Committee

The semester after passing the Qualifying Exam you should register for Dissertation 794a. You will do this each semester, excluding summers, after passing the Qualifying Exams, signing up for 794 a,b,c,d,z—for a minimum of two semesters—until your dissertation is approved for final submission.

At the same time, you should also take the necessary steps to create your Dissertation Committee and file an [Appointment or Change of Dissertation Committee Form](#). You should take steps to form your Dissertation Committee as soon as possible after passing the Qualifying Exam. Undue delay may result in putting your funding in jeopardy.

The Dissertation Committee is composed of at least three members. Two committee members must be from the home program, at least one of whom must be tenured, and there must be an Outside Member who must be from some other department; additional members may be included at the student’s and committee chair’s discretion. The committee chair must be from the student’s home department. Faculty eligible to serve as committee chairs and members include tenured and tenure track faculty, and non-tenure track faculty of outstanding stature who have a documented record of exceptional expertise and superior achievement in their field, and whose appointment has been approved by the dean. The [Appointment of Committee](#) form should be submitted to the department chair and sent to the Vice Dean of Dornsife for approval. A signed copy will be provided to the student. Hold on to a copy of the completed form, as you will need it when you submit your dissertation.

Since not all the people you want on your Dissertation Committee may have served on the Qualifying Exam Committee that approved your dissertation topic, the chair of your Dissertation Committee may convene a meeting of all prospective Dissertation Committee members in person in order to review your proposal with you and to sign the Appointment of Committee form. The purpose of this meeting is both to help determine what direction your further work should take, and to decide on the optimal composition of the committee itself.

Dissertation Defense and Submission

Procedures and deadlines to submit the dissertation are laid out in detail on the [Graduate School website](#).

A. Dissertation Review. Your committee chair has the prerogative of asking you to hold an unofficial review of the entire dissertation prior to the defense. This is a highly recommended procedure that provides an opportunity for your committee to meet with you and discuss the complete draft of your dissertation as a group. There are many good reasons for this, including: to encourage your committee members to decide as a group what re-writing they expect of you by the time of the defense (rather than making individual—perhaps even contradictory—demands). It also gives them, and you, a chance to consider the thesis as a whole (rather than chapter by chapter, as has presumably been the case thus far).

B. Scheduling Considerations. With the approval of your dissertation committee, you may schedule your Dissertation Review and final Defense whenever it is convenient—but unless you plan ahead, you may not be able to receive your degree during the semester in which you defend. Hence when thinking about scheduling your Defense and planning to complete your degree in a given semester, you need to keep in mind the time that may be needed between Dissertation Review, Defense, any necessary revisions, and submission. If you schedule your defense too close to the submission deadline, you may not have enough time to submit that term. Registration in 794 is required until the dissertation has been submitted to the Graduate School. In order to avoid registration in a semester, the required documentation and your manuscript must be submitted to the Graduate School by the Add/Drop date of that semester.

Working backward from the submission deadline and Defense, you also need to give your committee members a reasonable amount of time to read the full text of the thesis that you will be defending. Three or four weeks is about the minimum; of course, this depends on how much of the thesis your committee has already read, what changes they have wanted you to make, and how busy they are. In any case, you should get their agreement on this question!

Counting back from the submission deadline, then, it seems necessary for you to get the full final draft of your thesis to your committee members at or near the start of the semester in which you want to receive your degree. All in all, the minimum amount of time between getting the thesis to your committee and final submission is about three months, especially if you are to have a Dissertation Review.

To get your degree in a given semester, you must meet the university's submission deadline in the given term. It is your responsibility to check the Graduate School website to verify the deadlines for the semester you plan to submit. The deadlines are available [here](#). It is recommended that the Dissertation Review be held late in the semester before the semester in which the defense will be held. It takes at a minimum about two months between the Dissertation Review and submission, and you need to add onto this the time for your committee members to read the thesis before the Dissertation Review (say, about another month) = three months.

Further, the Graduate School does not guarantee the degree will be granted in the semester of submission, insofar as changes required by the Thesis Coordinator may slow the acceptance process. An earlier submission obviously allows more time for this.

Prior to the defense, please create a profile in [Thesis Center](#), the Graduate School's thesis processing system. Your committee will need to be complete in order for you to do this. Instructions can be found [here](#).

With good planning, hard work, and an amenable committee, one may do it all in one semester (although you will still have to turn in the initial draft during the previous semester). Here are some possible scenarios, but as you can see, they are tight.

Sample Schedules for Completion of Dissertation

Note: Deadlines for upload fluctuate slightly each term. *The following are sample schedules and should not be taken as literal deadlines.*

FALL DEFENSE (Sample Schedule)

Full Thesis to your committee - August 1
Dissertation Review - Sept. 1
Revised Thesis to your committee – Sept. 30
Defense – Oct. 15
Deposit (University Deadline) – November 1
Graduation – December

SPRING DEFENSE (Sample Schedule)

Full Thesis to your committee - December 1
Dissertation Review - Jan. 15
Revised Thesis to your committee – Feb. 15
Defense – March 10
Deposit (University Deadline) – April 1

SUMMER DEFENSE (Sample Schedule)

Full Thesis to your committee - March 1
Dissertation Review - April 15
Revised Thesis to your committee – May 10
Defense – June 1
Deposit (University Deadline) – July 1
Graduation – degree posted end of Summer

C. Defense Procedures and Paperwork

After the Defense, if...

- a) You do not pass, no forms are signed.
- b) You pass, and your thesis is found to be 100% complete, then the committee will electronically approve your thesis. You are given permission to upload, the Thesis Coordinator gives approval (possibly after further changes and a second upload), and everything is done.
- c) You pass, but (as in almost all cases) the committee demands changes. No approvals are given until the manuscript is satisfactory to all members. After your committee members have entered their approval of the manuscript, the Thesis Coordinator can clear you to upload. For more information about the process, please visit the [Graduate School website](#).

III. Appendix: Time to Degree

The following timeline represents optimal progress toward the degree.

Year 1

Semesters 1 and 2 – Coursework

Summer 1 - Begin preparing for the Master's Exam

Year 2

Semester 3 - Continue coursework.

Semester 4 - Continue coursework. Arrange for and take the Russian proficiency exam (a prerequisite for the Master's Exam); schedule and take the Master's Exam at the end of the semester.

Summer 2 - Language study; begin working through the Qualifying Exam Reading List.

Year 3

Semester 5 - Continue coursework.

Semester 6 - Complete any remaining required coursework. Complete Foreign Language requirements; begin consulting with faculty for Qualifying Exam Committee and file the Appointment of Qualifying Examination Committee form.

Summer 3 - Work on dissertation prospectus and Qualifying Exam reading list; language study.

Year 4

Semester 7 - Register for GRSC 800; submit the dissertation prospectus to the Qualifying Exam Committee; prepare for the Qualifying Exam.

Semester 8 - Register for GRSC 800. After Qualifying Exam, form your Dissertation Committee by filing a new Appointment of Committee form; set up a schedule for completion of the dissertation with your dissertation advisor.

Summer 4 - Dissertation research and writing.

Year 5

Semester 9 - Register for two units of CSLC 794a and CSLC 700. Research, write.

Semester 10 - Register for two units of CSLC 794b and CSLC 600; complete your dissertation and the dissertation defense.

Summer 5 - Submit the required form and dissertation to the Graduate School.

Your comments, questions, and suggestions how to make these guidelines more useful are welcome. Send them to the Director of Graduate Studies, Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures.

Revised 8-19-2023