

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**  
*DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS*

**RULES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.A. AND PH.D. DEGREES**

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**INTRODUCTION TO NELC**

1. The fields of study in which M.A. and Ph.D. programs are currently offered are, **in the Ancient Section:** Ancient Near Eastern History, Cuneiform Studies (Assyriology, Hittitology, Sumerology), Egyptology, Near Eastern Art and Archaeology (Anatolian, Egyptian, Iranian, Mesopotamian, Syro-Palestinian), Near Eastern Judaica, and Northwest Semitic Philology; and **in the Medieval and Modern Section:** Arabic Language and Literature, Islamic Archaeology, Islamic History and Civilization, Islamic Thought, Medieval Judaica and Judeo-Arabic, Modern Hebrew Language and Literature, Persian Language and Literature, and Turkish Language and Literature. In addition to the general departmental requirements for degrees set forth in this document, students in each area are bound by specific requirements set up by individual fields within the Department.

2. To be recommended by NELC for the M.A. degree, a student must:

- satisfy the minimum University residence requirements;
- fulfill the requirements in a minimum of 18 courses (language courses taken to prepare the student for passing modern foreign language examinations [see §14] do not count), of which 15 must be taken for quality grades and three may be taken on a pass/fail basis.
- attain a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.0 in courses;
- receive a grade of “high pass” in one reading examination (either French or German);
- submit an “Acceptable” M.A. thesis.

To be recommended by NELC for the Ph.D. degree, a student, in addition to the above requirements, must:

- receive a grade of “high” pass in a second reading examination (either French or German);
- fulfill the requirements in a minimum of 9 additional courses, which must be taken for quality grades. Individual fields may require the completion of additional courses, up to a maximum of 36 courses, of which three may be taken on a pass/fail basis.
- pass the comprehensive examinations;
- successfully defend a dissertation proposal at a public hearing so that he/she can be recommended by the Department for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree;
- submit a dissertation approved by the student’s dissertation committee;
- pass a defense of the dissertation and general area of study.

3. The Departmental **Counselors** are faculty members responsible for monitoring the degree program for each student. There are two Departmental Counselors, one for the Ancient Section and one for the Medieval and Modern Section. The relevant Departmental Counselor appoints the student's Advisor and conveys this information to the NELC office. The Counselor, together with the Advisor, supervises the student's course program and determines the scope of the comprehensive examinations.

4. The student's **Advisor** is a faculty member within the student's field of study who is appointed by the Departmental Counselor to serve as the immediate director of the student's degree program. The Advisor, with the student, determines which courses the student will take and, with the Departmental Counselor and appropriate faculty, sets up the student's comprehensive examinations. If a student's field or interests within a field change, the student may request the Departmental Counselor to assign a new Advisor, and the Counselor conveys this information to the NELC office.

5. The student (and not the Advisor or the Departmental Counselor) is responsible for being informed about and meeting the requirements of the University, the Department, and the field. A student in the Department should obtain the latest University catalogues and student manuals, as well as for the NELC Rules and Regulations and the specific requirements of the student's field.

#### **RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS**

6. The normal course load of a student in full-time Scholastic Residence is three courses per quarter for three quarters (normally Autumn, Winter, and Spring) with the fourth quarter (normally Summer) free. Hence, for a student entering in the Autumn Quarter, the degree requirements to be completed in the first year of residence are to be fulfilled before the beginning of the next Autumn Quarter.

7. The normal course load of a student in part-time Scholastic Residence is one or two courses per quarter; each part-time quarter must have a complementary part-time quarter to equal one full quarter. Time requirements for part-time students are computed on a *pro rata* basis.

## COURSE AND EXAMINATION GRADES

8. Course grades given are: **A, B, C, D, F, I, P, R,** and **W.**

**A, B, C, D** and **F** are quality grades.

**P** is a neutral grade indicating "passing" work in a graduate course for which the instructor does not assign a specific quality grade.

**R** ("register") indicates that the student has audited the course; **R** carries no degree credit.

**I** ("incomplete") indicates that the student has not completed the requirements of the course, but should make satisfactory arrangements with the instructor to complete the remaining work.

**W** indicates that the student has withdrawn from the course.

The numerical value of such grades is as follows: **A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0, I=0,** while grades **P, R,** and **W** are not used by the Department in computing averages. *All comprehensive examinations receive quality grades.*

9. Plus and minus grades (i.e., **A-, B+**, etc.) are occasionally given for courses and examinations. The plus grade is worth 0.3 more than a grade without plus (i.e., **B+=3.3, C+=2.3**). The minus grade is worth 0.3 less than a grade without minus (i.e., **A-=3.7, B-=2.7**). For courses and examinations, there is no **A+** or **D-**, nor can an **F** be qualified with a plus or minus.

10. Courses with grades of **D, F, I, R,** and **W** cannot be counted for credit towards a graduate degree.

11. It is expected that a student should earn a grade of at least **B** (3.0) in course work taken as a graduate student to be eligible for either the M.A. or Ph.D. degree. At the end of the first year of residence, a student whose cumulative grade average is less than **B** (3.0) will automatically be placed on probation. The student will be obliged to withdraw from the Department, without earning a degree, if the entire grade average is not brought up to **B** (3.0) by the end of the second year in residence. A student with an average below 3.0 may not take comprehensive examinations.

12. Students must make up all grades of **I** (“Incomplete”) before the end of Week 8 of the next quarter for which the student is registered. Prior to registration week, the NELC office provides the Counselors and Advisors with a list of the Incomplete grades of all students and courses for which a grade has not been assigned (blank). The Counselor, in consultation with the Advisor and the course instructor, normally will instruct the NELC office to convert an Incomplete to **W** (“Withdraw”) or **F** 18 months after the **I** was given, even if the student has been out of residence. A student with two or more Incompletes and/or blanks shall not register for further courses. Students with an outstanding Incomplete may not take comprehensive examinations.

### **THE YEAR 1 REVIEW**

13. During the first two weeks of Spring Quarter, the Advisor together with the other faculty members in the student's major field will review and evaluate the student's work. [NELC FORM 2004/§13] The NELC office will send a copy of the completed form to each student. Students must then arrange to meet with their respective Advisors for discussion of the comments on their evaluations.

### **MODERN LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS**

14. For the M.A. degree, students must attain a grade of "high pass" on a reading examination in either French or German before the beginning of Year 2. For the Ph.D. degree, students must attain a grade of “high pass” on reading examinations in both French and German. One of these exam requirements must be fulfilled before the beginning of Year 2; both of these exam requirements must be fulfilled before the beginning of Year 3. Students who do not meet those deadlines may not register for courses in the Department or for their degree program.

15. If a Ph.D. student wishes to substitute some other modern foreign language for either French or German, the student must submit a petition to the SAC detailing the reasons for the substitution, and the student’s Advisor will write a statement. In no case may students substitute for French or German a modern language which is part of the degree requirements for their field.

## **THE M.A. THESIS**

16. Each student will write an M.A. thesis, submitted in a format acceptable to the University dissertation office, in a field covered by the Department, which should demonstrate an ability to find information, think critically, synthesize independent arguments, and write clear expository prose. This thesis will be a substantial research paper<sup>1</sup> which could be either an entirely new research project, a development of an earlier term paper, or substantial reworking based on research previously conducted for the M.A. thesis, in the case of students admitted to NELC with an M.A.

17. By Friday of Week 10 in Spring Quarter of the first year, each student must:

- identify a topic for the M.A. thesis;
- consult with at least one of the two faculty readers for the M.A. thesis;
- submit in writing to the departmental office the topic and the name and approval of at least one faculty reader. [NELC FORM 2004/§17]

*Completion of this requirement is a prerequisite for registration for the following Autumn Quarter registration.*

18. The student will submit two copies of the completed M.A. thesis to the NELC office by the first day of Spring Quarter. The departmental office will record receipt of the thesis and will deliver the thesis to the two designated faculty readers. [NELC FORM 2004/§18]

19. The two faculty readers of the M.A. thesis are normally members of NELC. The Student Affairs Committee, in consultation with the student, the student's Advisor, and the faculty of the student's field, may allow the second reader to be from a department in this University other than NELC.

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<sup>1</sup>Guidelines for the M.A. thesis will be distributed separately.  
NELC Rules and Requirements (Rev. April 19, 2006)

20. The faculty readers will read and evaluate the M.A. thesis and indicate their acceptance (“Acceptable”) or rejection (“Not Acceptable”) of it to the NELC office by Friday of Week 2 of Spring Quarter. If they wish to do so, faculty members may grade the M.A. theses using the conventional letter grades; a thesis receiving a grade of at least **B** is “Acceptable” for purposes of fulfilling the M.A. thesis requirement.

### **THE YEAR 2 REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION TO CONTINUE**

21. By Week 3 of Spring Quarter, the SAC will meet to review all second-year students, and to determine for each student one of the following:

**I. M.A./Ph.D.** — the student may continue in the degree program through the M.A. and into the Ph.D. program.

**II. M.A.**—the student may continue in the degree program to the M.A. only.

**III. Discontinue**—the student has not met the requirements for the M.A. degree in NELC and will not be permitted to continue in the Department beyond the current year.

**IV. Defer**—the student is granted a one-time extension, at the conclusion of which the student’s performance will be reassessed by the faculty members of the student’s field, who recommend to the SAC a final decision.

22. In making its determinations, the SAC will consider each student’s dossier, which will include:

- written evaluations by the Advisor and by every NELC faculty member who has had the student in a class [NELC FORM 2004/§22];
- grades in all courses;
- fluency levels in the two modern foreign languages of scholarship;
- the M.A. thesis;
- the evaluations of the M.A. thesis by the faculty readers.

**Decision I. M.A./Ph.D.** allows the student to be recommended by NELC to receive the M.A. degree if all the following have been satisfied:

- a GPA of at least 3.0 for two years of approved coursework;<sup>2</sup>
- an “Acceptable” M.A. thesis;
- a grade of “high pass” for at least one modern foreign language of scholarship.

*With the condition that the student has achieved a grade of “high pass” in a second modern language before registering for the third year, the student may continue working in NELC toward the Ph.D.*

**Decision II. M.A.** allows the student to be recommended by NELC to receive the M.A. degree if the requirements listed under Decision I are met but the faculty in the student’s field determine that the student shows insufficient potential for Ph.D. work in this department.

*The student may not continue in NELC beyond the M.A. level.*

**Decision III. Discontinue** does not allow the student to be recommended by NELC to receive the M.A. This determination results when the requirements for the M.A. have not been met.

*The student is not permitted to continue in the Department and will be awarded no degree.*

**Decision IV. Defer** may be selected when the student’s record warrants the decision to “Discontinue” but there are extenuating circumstances. In such cases, the SAC, in consultation with the student’s Advisor and the other faculty of the student’s field, may grant a one-time extension of the deadlines for meeting the requirements. At that later time, the SAC will reconsider the options “I. M.A./Ph.D.,” “II. M.A.,” or “III. Discontinue.”

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<sup>2</sup>The minimum GPA of 3.0 must be maintained through the last quarter of the student’s second year.

23. The recommendations of the SAC—I. M.A./Ph.D., II. M.A., III. Discontinue, or IV. Defer—for the entire second-year cohort will be communicated to the Department and discussed and voted on in a NELC faculty meeting to be held by Week 4 of Spring Quarter. Notification of the Department's decisions will be sent by the Department to the students by Week 5 of Spring Quarter. [NELC FORM 2004/§23] Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their respective Advisors for discussion of the Department's decision and of future work.

### **THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

24. Students working for the Ph.D. degree are required to take a set of comprehensive examinations. These examinations are taken after the Department's approval of the SAC's recommendation of Decision I in the Year 2 Review and before the end of the student's fourth year in residence.

25. Courses offered by the Department are intended to assist students in preparing for their comprehensive examinations, but the examinations presuppose considerable independent work apart from courses. Students with outstanding Incompletes or Blanks or with a GPA less than 3.0 will not be permitted to take the comprehensive examinations.

26. The subjects of the comprehensive examinations are determined by the student's Advisor in consultation with the student and with the appropriate Departmental Counselor and appropriate faculty on the basis of the requirements of the individual field and the student's own interests.

27. The student will submit a written and approved list of the examinations and examiners to the departmental office by Week 10 of the quarter preceding that in which the exams will be taken, except that students planning to take examinations at the end of Summer Quarter will submit the written and approved list of examinations and examiners to the departmental office by the end of Week 5 of Spring Quarter so that the examinations may be deposited in the NELC office before faculty depart for the summer. [NELC FORM 2004/§27]

28. The comprehensive examinations must be completed within seven working days. Petitions for examinations in absentia will be allowed only in exceptional cases and must be approved by the student's Advisor, the SAC, and the Chair of the Department.

29. The examinations will be offered once each quarter, beginning during exam week, except that at the end of Summer Quarter the exams will begin two weeks before Autumn Quarter registration.

30. Each comprehensive examination must be passed with a grade of at least **B** (3.0).

31. Each comprehensive examination shall be read by two members of the faculty: the examining faculty member who writes the exam and who grades the exam as “first reader,” and a second faculty member who reviews the exam as “second reader.” [NELC FORM 2004/§31]

32. The graded exams are to be returned to the departmental office by the end of Week 3 of the quarter following the one in which the exam was taken.

33. Once examination grades are received, the NELC office will notify the student, the Advisor, the appropriate Counselor, and the examiners and will give the student a chance to read the faculty readers’ comments on the examinations. If each exam was graded 3.0 or above, the student may continue toward the Ph.D.

34. The student may repeat any examinations (full or partial) graded less than **B** (3.0) within 12 months (four quarters) after taking the first set of exams. The student may repeat a comprehensive examination no more than twice, and retakes must occur within this 12-month period. (The times for sitting for repeat exams and the grading of repeat exams are the same as those outlined above for the first attempt.)

## **THE PROPOSAL HEARING AND ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY**

### **35. Timing**

- Proposal hearings are held during the regular 11-week term of Autumn, Winter, and Spring Quarters only; **proposal hearings will not be held during Summer Quarter.**

- Students must be recommended for admission to candidacy within twelve months after the date at which they successfully take the comprehensive examinations.<sup>3</sup>
- Students who fail to meet the 12-month deadline for recommendation for admission to candidacy must repeat their comprehensive examinations.

36. **Written Proposal** The student will submit the following to the Chair of the Department at least two weeks before the proposal hearing:

- a detailed description of the proposed dissertation topic, approximately 10–15 pages, including a bibliography and an appraisal of previous work in the area;
- a printed abstract of the dissertation proposal with the signatures of the provisional dissertation committee [NELC FORM 2004/§36]; at the same time, an electronic version must be sent to the NELC office.

Concurrently, the NELC office will provide the faculty with:

- a list of all courses (all graduate courses taken by the student and, if relevant, all undergraduate courses taken in NELC) and all comprehensive examinations taken in the Department, together with the names of the faculty and the grades.

The departmental Administrator will circulate the abstract and list of comprehensive exam grades to all NELC faculty and will inform them of the date and location of the scheduled proposal hearing.

37. **Proposal Hearing** At least two weeks after submitting the proposal abstract with the signatures of the provisional dissertation committee, the student will make an oral presentation on the dissertation topic at a public hearing. The hearing, which will last about one hour, will be attended by the Chair of the Department and the members of the provisional dissertation committee. Other faculty and students may attend the hearing and may ask questions of the candidate. A quorum of five faculty, either from NELC or outside faculty who are members of the provisional dissertation committee, must be present at the proposal hearing.

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<sup>3</sup>Students who successfully pass the Comprehensive Examinations in exam week of Summer Quarter have until the end of Autumn Quarter of the following year (i.e., 15 months) to be admitted to candidacy, in order to avoid proposal hearings during Summer Quarter.

38. At the conclusion of the question period, all non-faculty will withdraw and the faculty will discuss the proposal and the student's performance and may offer recommendations and suggestions for the proposed project. All active NELC faculty and provisional dissertation committee members present will sign the proposal form [NELC FORM 2004/§38], and, if the proposal is approved, the Chair of the Department will forward to the Dean of Students in the Division of the Humanities a recommendation for formal admission to candidacy. [UNIVERSITY FORM]

The dissertation committee, composed of the dissertation Chairman and at least two other faculty members as readers, is formally appointed by the Chair of the Department. [NELC FORM 2004/§38]

39. Admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. is valid in NELC **for seven years only**; a student failing to complete the degree requirements within this time must repeat the comprehensive examinations and reapply to the SAC for admission to candidacy.

#### **THE DISSERTATION**

40. The dissertation, written on a topic approved by the Department on the basis of the student's admission to candidacy, will involve an original and significant contribution to knowledge.

41. Candidates are expected to submit to the dissertation committee sections of the dissertation as they are written and to maintain regular contact with the members of their committee to discuss their work.

42. When all the dissertation committee members are satisfied with the final draft of the dissertation, they will indicate their approval in writing. [NELC FORM 2004/§42]

## THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

43. The final examination for the Ph.D. is an oral defense of the dissertation and may include questions about the student's general area of study. After the student's dissertation has been approved by the dissertation committee, the student will arrange the time of the defense with the Chair of the Department. The defense must be scheduled at least eight months after admission to candidacy. The defense is to be held at least four weeks after the dissertation is submitted to the Department, and at least four weeks before the convocation at which the candidate expects to receive the degree. **No defense will be held during Summer Quarter.**

44. The student will present two complete copies of the dissertation in its approved form, and an abstract of the dissertation, in both printed and electronic versions, to the NELC office at least four weeks before the defense. These copies will be available for circulation among the faculty members of the Department.

45. The examining committee consists of

- the dissertation committee;
  - regular and emeritus faculty and academic staff of the Department;
  - faculty or academic staff from other units of the University of Chicago or from other universities who have been invited by the Chair of the Department on the recommendation of the dissertation committee; and
  - the representative of the Dean of Students in the Division of Humanities.
- [UNIVERSITY FORM]

The defense will be convened and moderated by the Chair of the Department, and a quorum of five faculty, either from NELC or outside faculty who are members of the dissertation committee, must be present at the defense. Students may also attend the defense as observers; as such, they may ask general questions but may not examine the candidate. The candidate and observers present will leave the room during the committee's deliberations and voting. Only members of the dissertation committee and other active NELC faculty may vote.

46. The dissertation committee and other faculty members of NELC who are present will sign the Report of Final Examination. **[UNIVERSITY FORM]** If a student fails the defense, the dissertation committee will specify the minimum and maximum time before a second defense is scheduled. If the dissertation committee determines that a second defense cannot take place within the seven-year valid candidacy period, the dissertation committee will recommend to the SAC whether or not §39 should be waived. **[NELC FORM 2004/§46]** The student may repeat the dissertation defense no more than once.

47. The preparation of the final copy of the dissertation is supervised by the office of the Dissertation Secretary, not by the Department. At the earliest stage possible in the writing of the dissertation, the student should secure information about the current regulations of that office. The student will deposit two copies of the dissertation together with a certificate of approval **[UNIVERSITY FORM]** signed by the Chair of the Department in the office of the Dissertation Secretary at least four weeks before the convocation at which the student expects to receive the degree.

48. One copy of the dissertation is returned to the NELC office by University Microfilms International; this copy will be deposited in the Oriental Institute Research Archives. If the student withholds the dissertation from University Microfilms International, regardless of any commitment to publish, one copy of the completed dissertation will be submitted to the NELC office before the University awards the degree. This copy will be deposited by the NELC office in the Oriental Institute Research Archives.

#### **EXCEPTIONS**

49. Students may petition that individual rules and regulations be waived, subject to extenuating circumstances, by submitting a petition form to the SAC **[NELC FORM 2004/§49]** together with a supporting letter from their Advisor.