

RULES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.A. AND PH.D. DEGREES
Revised July 2012, including minor revisions through September 2016

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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, Comparative Semitics, Cuneiform Studies (Assyriology, Hittitology, Sumerology), Egyptology, Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East, Near Eastern Art and Archaeology (Anatolian, Egyptian, Iranian, Islamic, 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 Ottoman and Turkish Studies. 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 outside of NELC to prepare the student for passing modern foreign language examinations [see #15] 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 in a non-English modern language of research;
- 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 in a non-English modern language of research;
- fulfill the requirements in a minimum of 9 additional courses, which must be taken for quality grades, fulfilling a total of a minimum of 27 courses, of which 24 must be taken for quality grades. Individual fields may require the completion of additional courses beyond the departmental minimum of 27, up to a maximum of 36 courses;
- 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 **Directors of Graduate Studies** are faculty members responsible for monitoring the degree program for each student. There are two Departmental Directors of Graduate Studies, one for the Ancient Section and one for the Medieval and Modern Section. The relevant Director of Graduate Studies appoints the student’s Advisor and conveys this information to the NELC office. The Director of Graduate Studies,

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 Director of Graduate Studies 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 Director of Graduate Studies 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 Director of Graduate Studies to assign a new Advisor, and the Director of Graduate Studies conveys this information to the NELC office.

5. The student (and not the Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies) 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 the NELC Rules and Requirements 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.

GRADUATE AID INITIATIVE REQUIREMENTS

8. Students admitted since 2007 on the Graduate Aid Initiative have an obligation to fulfill 5 units of teaching in the university. This pedagogical experience is designed to serve as one element in the preparation of NELC students for an academic career, along with advanced language study, research and/or work in the field in the Middle East. Every effort will be made to provide students desiring to serve as BA preceptors, language assistants, course assistants or lecturers in NELC courses with a pedagogically appropriate opportunity. The diverse nature of our curriculum in NELC does not allow for specific survey or language courses to be assigned to all students; the teaching regimen is therefore not stipulated in advance, and individual cases may vary. However, the Humanities Division recommends the following teaching schedule: 1 unit in the third year; 2

units in the fourth year; 2 units in the fifth year. It is also recommended that students consider pedagogical opportunities in the College, including [Writing Internships](#); before accepting such assignments, students should receive approval from the Director of Graduate Studies for their field (ancient or modern). Teaching responsibilities should not impede coursework, regular academic progress (including time spent in the Middle East for archaeological field work or dissertation research), and no guarantees can be made that students will be placed in particular courses.

Applications for teaching opportunities in NELC are due the third week of the Winter quarter preceding the academic year in question. Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies for their field regarding any questions related to teaching obligations. More details regarding teaching service are available for current students by logging in with cnet id and password [here](#).

In addition to the above service requirements, students in their third year of scholastic residence will be strongly encouraged to attend the [Teaching@Chicago conference](#) in the Orientation week (the week before autumn classes begin) before they begin teaching. They must also successfully complete the "Course Design and College Teaching" pedagogy course offered by the Chicago Center for Teaching. This course is graded P/F, and as such, will not be counted toward the quality grades required for the Ph.D.

COURSE AND EXAMINATION GRADES

9. 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.*

10. 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.

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

12. 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.

13. Faculty members will submit a grade for every graduate student enrolled in their courses no later than each quarter's grade submission deadline (as established by the Registrar). If the student has not completed the work or if the faculty member has not yet read and evaluated it, a formal grade of "I" or "C" as a place-holder will be submitted by the instructor of record. The student and faculty member will then have a limited time to submit the correct final grade. Recall that students falling below a certain GPA will no longer be considered in good standing by the Department and may be asked to leave the program. Any blanks on the transcript will be treated by the Director of Graduate Studies as student-generated incompletes and if there are two or more, the student will be denied enrollment until the blank is cleared, the same as would be true with "I"s. The Director of Graduate Studies will not make any attempt to contact relevant faculty and students to clarify circumstances and will not accept any assurances that this is not a real incomplete—only a letter grade will clear the record and allow enrollment. 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 Directors of Graduate Studies and Advisors with a list of the Incomplete grades of all students and courses for which a grade has not been assigned (blank). 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

14. 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 2011/§14] 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.

NELC students entering the doctoral program who have received a free-standing MA from the University of Chicago and who have in that process completed graduate level NELC courses or NELC language courses may request, at the end of their first year in the Ph.D. program, a reduction in the total number of courses required for the NELC Ph.D., up to a maximum of 9 courses (i.e., a maximum reduction from 27 to 18). The request must

include a list of the courses to be recognized and a letter of support from the academic adviser. Since courses cannot be counted towards two degrees, students whose request is approved will not receive a NELC MA. Beyond this, there is no effect on such students' standing or the program's requirements on them: their year of academic residence and graduate funding would be unaffected; the number and timing of language requirements, comprehensive examinations, progress reviews, and the submission of the second year paper all stand unchanged.

MODERN LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

15. For the M.A. degree, students must attain a grade of "high pass" on a reading examination in a non-English modern language of research before the beginning of Year 2. For the Ph.D. degree, students must attain a grade of "high pass" on reading examinations in a minimum of two non-English languages of research. One of these examination requirements must be fulfilled before the beginning of Year 2; both of these examination 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.

16. The faculty members in each field of study (as defined in Rule 1) will determine which modern languages of research may be used to fulfill the examination requirements. These languages will be listed in the written requirements of the field. If more than two languages are listed by the field, the student's adviser will determine which of the listed languages are required. Note that a student may not fulfill the requirement by taking a reading examination in a language that is part of the substantive degree requirements for his or her field of study. In many cases, the required languages will be French and German.

THE M.A. THESIS

17. 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 which could be either an entirely new research project, a development of an earlier term paper, or a substantial reworking based on research previously conducted for the M.A. thesis, in the case of students admitted to NELC with an M.A.

Guidelines for the MA Thesis are located [here](#).

18. 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 2016/§18]**

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

19. 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 2011/§19]**

20. 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.

21. 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

22. 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.

23. 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 2011/§23**];
- 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;¹
- 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."

24. 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 2011/§24]** Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their respective Advisors for discussion of the Department's decision and of future work.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

25. 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. Note that students required to take comprehensive exams in Egyptology take some of them at the end of the second year, separate from the rest of their exams.

26. 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.

27. The subjects of the comprehensive examinations are determined by the student's Advisor in consultation with the student and with the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies and appropriate faculty on the basis of the requirements of the individual field and the student's own interests.

28. 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 2015/§28]**

The guidelines for the oral examination for modern students can be found [here](#).

29. The examinations will be offered once each quarter, during exam week,

except that at the end of Summer Quarter the exams will begin three weeks before the first day of Autumn Quarter.

30. The comprehensive examinations must be completed within seven working days, counting from the first day of the scheduled exam period for that quarter. Petitions for examinations outside of this period or 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. Students on the modern side are expected to take the oral exam in Islamic Civilization before they sit for their comprehensive exams. They may do so any time between the end of their second year (after passing the 2-year review) up until the end of their fourth year (12th quarter) in the program.

The guidelines for the oral examination for modern students can be found [here](#).

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

32. 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 2011/§32]**

33. 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.

34. Once examination grades are received, the NELC office will notify the student, the Advisor, the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies, 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.

35. 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

36. 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 6 months after they successfully take the comprehensive examinations,

i.e., 6 months from the date the last comprehensive examination was graded with the required passing grade.²

- Students may obtain an extension for their proposal hearing of up to an additional 6 months, with the provision that they submit to the NELC office written approval for an extension signed by their advisor (NELC form 2012/§36).
- Students who fail to meet the 12-month deadline for recommendation for admission to candidacy must repeat their comprehensive examinations.

37. **Written Proposal** The student will submit the following to the department coordinator at least two weeks before the proposal hearing:

- One PDF of a detailed description of the proposed dissertation topic, approximately 10–15 pages, including a bibliography and an appraisal of previous work in the area;
- One PDF of just the abstract;
- One paper copy of [NELC FORM 2015/§37] containing the abstract of the dissertation proposal and the signatures of the provisional dissertation committee, and the names of the proposed dissertation committee (identify anyone outside of NELC by the UC department or other university).

Concurrently, the departmental coordinator will send the faculty an e-mail message announcing the date, time, location, and title of the scheduled proposal hearing with a copy of the abstract attached and noting that course and comprehensive exam grades are available in the NELC office.

38. **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.

39. 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/§39], 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.

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.

40. 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

41. 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.

42. 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. **[NELC FORM 2015/§42]**

43. When all the dissertation committee members are satisfied with the final draft of the dissertation, they will indicate their approval in writing. **[NELC FORM 2011/§43]**

THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

44. 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.**

45. At least four weeks before the defense, the student will submit to the NELC office the signed paper copy of [NELC FORM 2011 §43] and e-mail the department coordinator a PDF of the complete approved final draft of the dissertation and a PDF of just the abstract for posting. The student will provide members of the committee with a full and final copy of the dissertation in either print or electronic format, according to their preference.

46. 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.

47. 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 §40 should be waived. **[NELC FORM 2011/§47]** The student may repeat the dissertation defense no more than once.

48. 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. Dissertations are submitted only electronically; students must upload the final dissertation file by Friday of seventh week in the quarter in which the student will graduate. The Department is informed by the Dissertation Office when the file is uploaded, then submits its approval electronically.

EXCEPTIONS

49. Students may petition that individual rules and requirements be waived, subject to extenuating circumstances, by submitting a petition form to the SAC **[NELC FORM 2011/§49]** together with a supporting letter from their Advisor.

¹The minimum GPA of 3.0 must be maintained through the last quarter of the student's second year.

²If the deadline for the proposal hearing falls during Summer Quarter, then students will have until the end of Autumn quarter of the following academic year to be admitted to candidacy, in order to avoid proposal hearings during Summer Quarter.