

# The Orals Examination Contract

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Contract \_\_\_\_\_

Projected Exam Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Committee (printed name) \_\_\_\_\_

**Field 1** \_\_\_\_\_  
(attach list)

Committee Member #1 (printed name) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Approval \_\_\_\_\_

**Field 2** \_\_\_\_\_  
(attach list)

Committee Member #2 (printed name) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Approval \_\_\_\_\_

**Field 3** \_\_\_\_\_  
(attach list)

Committee Member #3 (printed name) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Approval \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Executive Officer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Result \_\_\_\_\_ Chair Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## THE SECOND EXAMINATION

The Second Examination (“the Orals”) consists of a 2-hour oral examination in three fields, administered by a committee of three professors. All examiners must hold appointments to the doctoral faculty in English at the Graduate Center (any exceptions, for a student doing interdisciplinary work, for example, require the Executive Officer’s approval).

In planning for the Second Examination, students should:

1) Decide upon three fields of inquiry. A field list may be organized around a genre, a historical period, a major author or set of authors, or a theoretical approach. Fields should be broad enough to constitute the framework for an undergraduate course, and focused enough to provide a basis for advanced scholarly research. Make lists of primary and secondary sources that seem appropriate to each field. In order to ensure scholarly and professional range, the student should avoid overlap among the lists. Talk to as many members of the Program as possible, students as well as faculty, about topics, fields, reading lists, and appropriate faculty members who might direct the dissertation and/or sit on the Examination Committee. Take advantage of faculty office hours.

2) Ask a member of the faculty, probably the person who will serve as Dissertation Director, to chair the Examination Committee and to offer advice in refining the field lists. Some students work successfully with professors without having taken their seminars, but most members of the faculty will want to see evidence of a student’s ability to write research papers if they have never had that person in class.

3) Choose other examiners with the assistance of the Committee Chair, and ask for guidance in establishing the final reading lists. Each examiner must approve his or her field list and sign the contract. Ideally, examiners should be familiar with the other two lists before signing off on their own. The Chair of the Examination Committee must review the contents of all lists before signing off as chair. **The completed lists and signed Second Examination Contract must be submitted to the Assistant Program Officer at least six weeks before the examination date.** The Executive Officer will contact the student if there is any objection to the lists. At the examination itself, each of the three examiners is normally allotted 40 minutes to ask questions based on the list he or she supervised. Immediately following the examination, the Committee members consult and award the student one of three grades: pass, pass with distinction, or fail. The mark of distinction requires an outstanding performance on all the constituent parts; a notation of this honor appears on the student’s official transcript. A student who fails the examination, or one part of it, must retake the relevant section(s) with the same field lists and examiners(s). Students who wish to make any changes must secure the approval of the Executive Officer. After passing the Second Examination, a student must have a dissertation prospectus approved within one year.