



Harpur College of Arts and Sciences

**Translation Research and Instruction Program**

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# Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

For Ph.D. students in the Translation Research and Instruction Program (TRIP)

## 1. Guidelines

These guidelines are meant to help you anticipate and prepare for the comprehensive exams (“comps”). As a program that is by definition interdisciplinary and that does not fully “house” any BU faculty, TRIP students work with faculty across academic disciplines in many campus departments. These guidelines exist to provide a clear explanation of TRIP’s comprehensive exam process and expectations, in order to support students and faculty in understanding the exam process.

## 2. “Pre-Dissertation” Work or Becoming ABD

You are eligible to take the comps upon having satisfied all coursework (36 credits of degree-counting coursework, unless stipulated otherwise). The comps are a formal tool to prepare yourself for writing the dissertation and to receive substantial feedback before embarking on that project. To pass the comps and obtain ABD (all-but-dissertation) status, you will need to acquire and display broad and profound familiarity with the relevant fields of your interest and be able to articulate the specific intervention in the scholarship you envision with your project. This requirement also applies to projects that consist of a translation, as the dissertator must articulate in their analysis the relevance of their translation to the existing scholarship.

- i. **The Dissertation Prospectus** takes the form of a substantial (30-50 page) paper, devoted to a theoretical issue or sub-area explicitly related to translation studies, which will help you establish the direction of your dissertation. It should involve substantial scholarship and show that you are familiar with the current bibliography on the topic selected and are able to articulate your argument in an academically acceptable format. The paper also serves as a dissertation proposal in that it defines the areas that you will be focusing on for your research.

Initially, in the fourth semester, you are required to complete the Prospectus and Dissertation Writing workshop sequence to write a draft of your prospectus, in consultation with your advisor. You continue to work closely with your advisor on the prospectus after the workshop, and all committee members are encouraged to participate in the process of writing. Scheduling other parts of the exam are pending the advisor's approval of the prospectus.

- ii. **Major Field** : This section of the exam is devoted to a theme that is your major area of specialization. It treats your area of expertise, likely in its historical dimension, and thus places the prospectus in a broader context. The nature and scope of this theme and its historical dimension is represented by the reading list and is contingent on your specific project.

This is a take-home exam, to be scheduled upon approval of (i). You have 72 hours (usually starting at 9 a.m. on a Friday and ending the subsequent Monday at 9 a.m.) to write an essay in response to one or more broad questions formulated by the examiner. You should consult with the examiner about the expected length of the essay, which may range from 10 to 25 pages. Schedule this exam with the TRIP Coordinator a minimum of two weeks prior to the Friday you plan to take it. The TRIP Coordinator will email you your exam question(s); the final essay is to be submitted electronically to the TRIP Coordinator, who will forward the document to the examiner.

- iii. **Minor Field** : This is a second area of specialization. It may be conceived as another aspect of the dissertation that complements the major area of expertise. Consult with your advisor to make sure that the fields for exams (ii) and (iii) are sufficiently differentiated. The format of the minor exam, which is to be scheduled for a separate weekend, is the same as (ii).

- iv. **Oral Examination**: This segment brings together the dissertation prospectus and the written exams, and it involves all of the committee members. You prepare a short presentation of your project. Committee members may ask questions about the presentation, the dissertation prospectus, and/or the written exams (in addition to

Once the prospectus has been approved by all committee members, you can contact the committee to schedule the oral examination (iv), which is typically to take place while classes are in session. (Contact the TRIP Coor