

Harvard University
Department of South Asian Studies

HANDBOOK
FOR
Ph.D. STUDENTS

August 2020

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**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM
SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS
(full descriptions follow)**

The First Two Years

Coursework

- 16 courses.

Languages

- Written examinations in two modern research languages, generally French and German.

Year Three

General Examinations

- To be completed by the end of the third year.
- Teaching.

Year Four

Dissertation Prospectus

- To be completed within one year of taking the general exams.
- Teaching.
- Many students also apply for travel fellowships to conduct dissertation research in Year Five.

Year Five and Following

- Many students spend all or a part of their fifth year in the field.

The Dissertation

- To be completed normally by the end of the seventh year.
- After approval of the Prospectus, at least one chapter each term must be submitted to the advisor.

**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

THE FIRST TWO YEARS (in detail)

Advising

Incoming students will have an advisor in the field of study closest to their own interests. The advisor is responsible for working out a plan of study and signing the study card at the beginning of each semester. The Department's Director of Graduate Studies functions as a more general advisor to all graduate students in relation to the Department and GSAS policies and procedures. When a student submits his or her prospectus to the Department, he or she also suggests an advisor to direct the dissertation. The progress of every student will be reviewed each year by the Department.

General requirements

Sixteen courses and a minimum of two years in residence are required.

Core requirements:

1. A minimum of four courses in Sanskrit, Tibetan, or a modern South Asian language at the advanced level.
2. Two courses in a second South Asian language.
3. Eight courses in the student's special field, including related courses in other departments.
4. Reading knowledge of two modern research languages, at least one of which will normally be French or German, and the other of which can be any modern language relevant to the student's special field. Reading knowledge must be demonstrated by the end of the second year of residence, ordinarily by passing a language exam with an honors grade.

Language requirements

Written examinations in two modern research languages, generally French and German, must be passed with an honors grade by the end of the second year of residence. Another modern language relevant to the student's special field, but not the student's native language, may be substituted for one, but not both, of the required languages.

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Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Academic Advising

Advisors meet with their doctoral students—especially those at the pre-dissertation stage—a minimum of three times per semester, for at least an hour each meeting: at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester. For students who are working elsewhere and easily accessible via phone and/or email, the same general guidelines for contact hours apply.

Advisors remain in contact with doctoral students as above during periods of leave.

In advising first- and second-year doctoral students, special attention is paid to the work of choosing classes. Coursework selections are meant to be general enough to provide context for the student's special area(s) of interest and specific enough to guide the student toward both General Examination fields and a workable dissertation topic. Advisors also help ensure that students meet their language requirements and their general course requirements in a timely fashion.

In advising third-year students, special attention is paid to helping the student assemble a committee for General Examinations.

For students who are post-generals, advisors provide timely reading (within four weeks of submission) and substantial commenting on drafts of the Dissertation Prospectus and all subsequent dissertation chapters. Advisors also counsel students on seeking employment, from reading drafts of letters of application and commenting on writing samples and job talks to introducing students to scholars in the field at conferences and seminars.

Requests for recommendation letters are to be made by the student at least three weeks in advance of the deadline; recommendation letters are written and submitted by the advisor in a timely fashion.

Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Ph.D. Guidelines on “Time” Courses

1. TIME-C (i.e., time for course-related reasons) is to be used only for preparation for General Examinations, normally during the one or two terms leading up to the anticipated time of generals, but not before the fifth term. The only exception to this is in the case of a student who takes the generals in the fourth or fifth term (in which case, TIME-C may be appropriate in the fourth or even third term).
2. Post-generals students engaged in dissertation work will normally register for one, two, three, or four courses of 300 level courses: Direction of Doctoral Dissertation (in addition to whatever other regular course-work they may elect to take in a given semester).
3. All Ph.D. Teaching Fellows will be expected to register for one course of TIME-T (time for Teaching Fellow reasons) per 1/5 teaching time equivalent per semester, irrespective of their stage of progress or year of study in the program.
4. While any number of 300 level courses may serve to fulfill the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences’ eight course requirement for the A.M. degree and sixteen course requirement for the Ph.D. degree, TIME courses (whether TIME-C, TIME-R, or TIME-T) will not.

Language Requirements

All doctoral students—in consultation with their advisors—are required to achieve at least intermediate reading competence in two modern languages of secondary scholarship relevant to their course of study (such as French, German, Japanese, Chinese), *in addition* to whatever primary source languages are required in their fields.

The modern language requirements must be fulfilled before taking General Examinations.

Department of South Asian Studies
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Teaching

While teaching is not required for the degree, doctoral students are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities for teaching at Harvard.* These opportunities include teaching in South Asian Studies courses, General Education courses, courses in other FAS departments, and in junior and senior tutorials in the undergraduate concentration.

Generally, students who wish to teach are able to secure positions. In addition to its financial benefits, teaching is considered integral to the program of doctoral studies at Harvard.

Students may begin teaching in the third year. Normally first-year and second-year students are not allowed to teach. Students should seek out Teaching Fellow positions by approaching faculty with whom they would like to work. It is helpful to give them a resume with a cover letter indicating experience and courses you are interested in teaching. To serve as a tutor in the Undergraduate Program, contact the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Teaching Fellow training and workshops are held throughout the year at the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. First time Teaching Fellows are required to participate in the Bok Center orientation week training sessions.

*Please note: Ph.D. students are guaranteed teaching in the third and fourth year as part of their admissions packages. Students are still expected to follow the above measures to secure teaching positions in the third and fourth year.

**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Year Three: Ph.D. General Examinations

After the satisfactory completion of two years of full-time study and the modern language requirements, a student prepares for the General Examinations. The student should consult with his or her primary advisor in formulating the plan for the exams and deciding upon examiner(s) for each exam.

Students are expected to take their general examinations no later than the end of their third year in the program.

For students in the Sanskrit and Tibetan tracks, there are usually four written exams:

1. a language translation exam, without dictionary, from a Sanskrit or Tibetan text of average difficulty;
2. a translation exam, with dictionary, of texts in the student's special field, with a discussion of textual problems or thematic issues;
3. a broad exam in South Asian Studies based on reading lists put together by the student in consultation with the advisor; and
4. an exam in the student's special field.

For students in the South Asian Studies track, there are normally three written exams, corresponding to 2, 3, and 4 above. In place of the translation without dictionary exam (1 above), students in the South Asian Studies track will be required to demonstrate, by test or otherwise, their speaking and listening proficiency in a modern South Asian language.

Students may also take an optional additional exam in a secondary field or discipline, often involving a faculty member from another department. Upon passing their generals students will be expected to complete a Dissertation Prospectus within a year.

Department of South Asian Studies

Notice of Intent to take Ph.D. General Examinations

Student's Name _____ Option _____

Generals to be Taken in _____ semester, 20 _____

Area of Specialization _____

Primary Academic Advisor _____

NOTE: Please include a bibliography for each of the non-language exams, signed by the examiner of that exam. Please remember that each bibliography must begin with a paragraph explaining the nature of the topics chosen and the rationale for selecting the materials listed.

Remarks: Please include information about any course incompletes, and unfulfilled language or other requirements:

Student's Signature

Date

Primary Advisor Approval

Date

Department of South Asian Studies

Ph.D. General Examination Certification Form

Student's Name _____

Examination Completed in _____ **Semester, 20** _____

Area of Specialization _____

Examiner _____

Primary Academic Advisor _____

Grade: _____

Remarks:

Examiner's Signature

Date

**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Year Four: The Dissertation Prospectus

Upon passing the general examinations students will be expected to complete a dissertation prospectus within a year's time and no later than the spring term of their fourth year. The prospectus should be in the range of 15 to 20 pages and include: 1) a clear statement of the dissertation project, its central problems and methodology; 2) its place in the context of related scholarship; 3) its importance to the field. The prospectus should also include a chapter outline and extensive bibliography.

Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the student to formulate, with as much advice and consultation as appropriate, a dissertation project that seems significant and worthwhile to him or her, *and that others will recognize as a solid contribution both to his or her subfield and to the field of South Asian Studies more generally*. In this regard please refer to the enclosed statement "On Drafting a Dissertation Prospectus," and keep well in mind the following statement: "Each dissertation, in making a contribution to knowledge, should also illuminate our understanding of South Asian Studies."

Each student must choose a member of the Harvard faculty to supervise the writing of the Prospectus. Such a faculty member will most likely, but not necessarily, be the advisor who has been supervising the student's program to that point. The student must also propose two or three additional faculty members to serve on his or her Prospectus Committee, to be approved by the advisor.

Advisor Responsibilities

Advisors are expected to be involved actively in the development of the Prospectus—especially with regard to its scope and purpose—and to guide the student through early drafts.

On Drafting a Dissertation Prospectus

The purpose of a Prospectus is to enable students: (1) to clarify what they conceive to be the nature and significance of their prospective dissertation work, and (2) to receive constructive criticism, advice and approval from the faculty most likely to be involved in the full dissertation writing process. Formulating a Prospectus represents *a significant stage* in the course of dissertation work, and its importance should not be underestimated. Not only does it allow students to come to a fuller and more adequate understanding of their own project; it also enlists the active support of the faculty who are expected to provide significant advice and criticism at this crucial stage in its development.

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While there are no well-established formulae or models for writing a Prospectus, every Prospectus should attend to the following three issues:

1. Topic and thesis. There is an important distinction between a topic and a thesis. A topic represents the issue which the dissertation addresses. A thesis constitutes the position which the student takes in relation to the topic; i.e., the central claim which is to be defended. For example:

Topic: Humor in Tamil Religious Poetry

Thesis: Humor plays an important role in medieval Tamil poetry, particularly in long narratives composed by Jain authors. This dissertation will argue that humor and its variants—irony, sarcasm—play an important role in Jain conceptions of human development, allowing the audience of readers and listeners to distance themselves from worldly affairs. Humor, in other words, marks the beginnings of *vairagya*, disdain for the world.

2. Method. The aim of this aspect of the Prospectus is not only to show how the dissertation will be done, but that the student is familiar enough with the topic that the project can be done, and within a reasonable amount of time. Consequently, in discussing method, it is especially important to attend to any special theoretical problems that might occur in the course of research and to note how these problems might be addressed. The Prospectus must also provide an outline of the projected chapter divisions and a brief description of how the argument will be developed from chapter to chapter.

3. Contribution to scholarship. Students should specify as carefully as they can what they consider to be the various ways their project will contribute to the field of study in which they work. In particular, it is helpful to write a brief statement of the current status of their topic within their larger field of study, to indicate the various problems at issue, and to show how their project will advance the discussion.

It is not unusual that there be a period of letdown and even listlessness following general exams, for the successful conclusion of exams marks the end of an intense and highly structured program of study. Students are now expected to initiate and structure their own study, and it often takes some time to learn how to do this. Also, students usually take on various teaching responsibilities after generals. As a result, work on the Prospectus is sometimes postponed until shortly before the due date one year after the exams. When this happens, there is a sharp and unfortunate break between preparation for the generals and work on the Prospectus. This break could be easily avoided if the student's "special topic" general exam, and study for the exam, is explicitly conceived as *preparation for the Prospectus*. Indeed, it might be helpful preparation for this exam to attempt to write at least the first draft of the Prospectus *before* the exam itself is taken. This would allow students to present their Prospectuses soon after generals and to move on to the main business at hand, the writing of the dissertation.

**Department of South Asian Studies
Dissertation Prospectus Checklist**

Once a student and his or her advisor have determined that the Dissertation Prospectus is complete, the student must submit four (4) copies of the Prospectus, along with a copy of this checklist, signed by the advisor, to the Department Administrator.

- Document format is 12 pt. font, double-spaced.
- The length of the prospectus (excluding bibliography and notes) is roughly 15 pages.
- Bibliography should be representative but need not be exhaustive.
- A copy of this checklist, signed by the student's advisor, must accompany the Prospectus.
- A list of suggested committee members should be included.

Proposed Committee Members:

Primary Advisor's signature

Date

(Sample)

PROSPECTUS

For a Dissertation entitled

**Sandalwood and Carrion:
Smell in South Asian Culture and Religion**

to be presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of South Asian Studies

Harvard University

by

James Andrew McHugh

Advisor: Professor Parimal G. Patil

May 2010

**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

The Dissertation

The dissertation should not exceed 75,000 words or 300 pages in length. It must be a substantial and original piece of work that demonstrates mastery of the field and the student's chosen topic.

The dissertation committee normally consists of three members, including the dissertation advisor. Two members of the committee must be members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Frequently, the committee will include at least one member from outside the Department, and occasionally one from outside the University. Students are expected to complete two chapters of their dissertation by the spring term of their fifth year. After this they are expected to produce at least one acceptable chapter of the dissertation each semester.

The dissertation must be an original work demonstrating the candidate's ability to do independent research in the special field. The dissertation must conform to the requirements described on the Formatting Your Dissertation page within GSAS' Policies at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/formatting-your-dissertation> and to any further requirements of style and form specified by the Department. After it is completed, the dissertation must be submitted to the dissertation committee at least three weeks before the defense. If this deadline for submission is not met, the student will be unable to graduate during the current degree period. Students are required to ascertain whether committee members want or need a hard copy or a digital copy of the dissertation prior to the defense. The dissertation will be publicly defended in a round-table discussion that includes members of the dissertation committee and other interested parties.

An overall GSAS policy has been established that students ordinarily will not be permitted to register beyond their tenth year in the Graduate School. However, exceptions to this rule may be made for students who have taken maternity or parental leave or for students with other special circumstances. If an exception is requested, GSAS will require a letter from the advisor explaining the progress the student has made and the reason for the request; and a letter from the student explaining the plan of completion. Students no longer enrolled because of this policy will have the status of "withdrawn." Students are free to apply for readmission to the Graduate School, so as to re-register for the purpose of receiving the degree, when their dissertation is completed.

**Department of South Asian Studies
Ph.D. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Information on Submission of the Dissertation for Ph.D. Candidates

I. Resource Guides and Paperwork

The following documents are sent to you after your Prospectus has been approved:

Formatting Your Dissertation – This is the official Faculty of Arts & Sciences' style guide for preparation of the dissertation, and hence is an indispensable source of information for all post-Prospectus doctoral students. It can be found at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/formatting-your-dissertation>.

Information for Degree Applicants – While specific dates will be updated every year, the basic timetable of Faculty of Arts & Sciences' degree deadlines remains perennially the same. You can view these dates on GSAS' Academic Calendar at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-calendar-2020-2021>.

Application for Degree – Degree application information can be found at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/application-degree>. Applications must be submitted by the appropriate date as listed above under Information for Degree Applicants.

II. The Timing of Submission

When you think that you are within reach of completing your dissertation draft, your dissertation advisor should gather the Examining Committee; the Examining Committee should include the primary advisor and two (or sometimes three) additional faculty members, at least two of whom must be from the Faculty of Arts & Sciences.

The requisite number of copies of the final draft of the thesis should be submitted directly to the readers. Do not submit a copy to the Department. Once the Examining Committee is in place, a date for the dissertation defense will be set. In anticipating a defense date, keep in mind that your readers may need up to six weeks' reading time.

Dissertation Acceptance Certificate – The Department Administrator will prepare and deliver to the Chair of your thesis Examining Committee your Dissertation Acceptance Certificate immediately prior to the defense. If no revisions are required, or as soon as any and all revisions are completed, and all examiners have signed the Certificate, it should be returned to the Department Administrator so that copies can be made. The original will then be sent to the Registrar's Office, at which point you will be ready to proceed to make final arrangements for binding your finished dissertation.

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Submitting Your Dissertation – Following the examination, the student, with the help of the dissertation advisor, should make any necessary corrections to the dissertation. Students do not submit a bound copy, rather they pay ProQuest which will make a bound copy for the Harvard archives. For more information on submitting your dissertation, go to <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/submitting-your-dissertation>.

III. Related Matters

Dissertation Abstract – You will need to prepare a dissertation abstract, not to exceed 350 words, prior to the dissertation defense. The abstract is required for publication in ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Publishing Your Dissertation – Upon final approval, the dissertation is distributed based on the permissions and publishing options you, as the student, select during the submission process. For information on publishing options, go to <https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/publishing-options>.

Department of South Asian Studies

Satisfactory Progress Requirements **(from the GSAS Policies page)**

All students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences must be making satisfactory progress in order to be eligible for any type of financial aid. The following five provisions define satisfactory progress.

1. During the first two years of graduate study any student who is permitted to register is considered to be making satisfactory progress.
2. In each of the first two years a student must have achieved the minimum grade-point average required by this faculty: a “B” average.
3. Students must meet the requirements for the A.M. degree (even if they do not wish to obtain this degree) by the end of the fifth term.
4. By the end of the third year a student must have passed General Examinations except in cases where deferment has been formally granted.
5. By the end of the fourth year a student must have obtained approval of a Dissertation Prospectus except in cases where deferment has been formally granted.
6. By the end of the fifth year and each subsequent semester during which a student is allowed to register, she or he must have produced at least one acceptable chapter of the dissertation. It is expected that students will complete their degree by the end of the seventh year unless a formal extension is granted.

Petitions for Extensions

If for any reason a doctoral candidate anticipates being unable to fulfill any of these steps within the specified or expected time period, he or she must submit a written petition for an extension—countersigned by the advisor—to the Director of Graduate Studies. In particular, once a student is beyond the seventh year, he or she must petition (annually) for more time in the program. Extensions will not be granted past the tenth year.

After their seventh year in the program, students who are unable to present evidence of progress on their dissertation, or who assume professional commitments out of residence that prevent them from sustaining it, may be asked either to apply for a leave of absence, or, if the limitations on leave time have been reached, to withdraw from the program. (In the latter instance, if a student subsequently completes the dissertation out of residence or is able to return to full-time resident study, he or she may be re-admitted to the program at the discretion of the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.)

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Failure to maintain satisfactory progress in the program may result in being placed on “grace” (equivalent to a warning) or unsatisfactory status (equivalent of probation). If deficiencies are not rectified, a student may be required to withdraw from the program. These determinations will be made in consultation with the advisor and with the Director of Graduate Studies who routinely review student progress.

Non-Resident Status

Students needing to spend significant periods of time away from campus may apply for nonresident status. If you are not registering for a particular semester or for a year, you must file for non-resident status. Information pertaining to non-residency can be obtained from the Ph.D. Program Administrator, from the GSAS offices, or at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/registration/non-resident-students>.

As a non-resident student, you should apply to be a Traveling Scholar (or an Exchange Scholar—see below) if your time away will be primarily devoted to work towards your degree. Apart from limits on time-to-degree, there is no limit on the number of terms you may be a Traveling Scholar.

If your time will be primarily devoted to activities other than degree work, you should apply for a Leave of Absence. Students will normally be permitted to spend a maximum of four semesters on leave of absence status prior to completion of the degree program. A maximum of two semesters on leave of absence is allowed prior to passing the General Examinations. The total number of semesters spent on leave need not be taken consecutively.

It is also possible to spend time studying at another university as an Exchange Scholar. For more information, please consult GSAS’ Policies at <https://gsas.harvard.edu/policies>.

Time spent out of residence as a Traveling Scholar, on a Leave of Absence, or as an Exchange Scholar will normally constitute time accrued in the program, i.e., will count as part of the ten-year time-to-degree limit. For exceptions to this, please consult the Department Administrator.