

**MEDIEVAL AND BYZANTINE STUDIES  
PHD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS STRUCTURE**

**Setting up the exam:**

- (a) Most of the burden is placed on the student to form an exam committee and generate reading lists with the committee members.
- (a) Each student has three advisers: the MBS director as general advisor, a major faculty advisor in the area of specialization (supervisor of dissertation) and a minor faculty advisor in the minor area.
- (b) Reading lists have to be submitted to and approved by the faculty advisors and the director of MBS by the end of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to sit for comps.

**Fields:** One major field (= student's area of specialization) and one minor area.

**Structure:** Three days, 4 hours each (12 hours total), as follows:

Day 1: Major Field, Part One: The field at large and its methodologies.

4 hours in the student's major field, or *area of specialization* (i.e. Thought and Worship, History and Social Structures, and Cultural and Artistic Expressions, or their equivalents in the Byzantine focus, usually defined as one discipline or a combination of two or more disciplines). The exam tests the student's knowledge in the major field broadly construed and its necessary methodologies. The exam is based on a substantial reading list generated by the student and approved by the faculty advisor and the director of MBS by the end of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to sit for comps. The reading list is connected to specific course work in the field and assumes the readings from given course syllabi, but it is expected to go beyond individual course requirements and augment course contents to form baseline knowledge for the larger scholarly field.

Suggested structure: Answer four questions out of five or six.

Day 2: Major Field, Part Two: Research field.

4 hours in the student's particular focus of research leading towards his/her dissertation. Based on a substantial reading list (see above) demonstrating wider knowledge of the research field (not only the narrow research topic) and its methodologies.

Suggested structure: Answer four questions out of five or six.

Day 3: Minor Area

4 hours in the minor area as defined by the student and the minor faculty advisor. The minor area should only have limited overlap with the area of specialization (major field) and should demonstrate the student's competence in multiple disciplines.

Suggested structure: Answer three questions out of four or five.

**Examiners:** 2 examiners in major field (one of the them is the student's major faculty advisor); 1 in the minor area (student's minor faculty advisor). All three examiners are expected to read the entire exam, comment on their specific segments, and suggest an overall grade for the exam.

**Coordinators of the exam:** Director of MBS and the student's major faculty advisor (supervisor of dissertation). (Duties: gather all questions, oversee the exam, gather evaluations, and submit results to graduate school.)

**Note on reading lists:** Due to the interdisciplinary nature of Medieval Studies, requirements for particular fields will differ. Accordingly, the Center does not set exact requirements for the numbers of books, primary sources or other materials which should be covered by examinations. Each student will develop reading lists for both MA and PhD exams in consultation with their advisers. In order to assure parity throughout the program, these lists must be approved by the director of MBS at least one semester before the student intends to sit for the exams.