

**Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures**  
**University of Kansas**  
**The Portfolio Ph.D. Examination**  
*Literature track*

**The Professional Portfolio**

From the first semester in the program, graduate students prepare a Professional Portfolio representing their work. This portfolio replaces the written comprehensive examinations. Through the portfolio, students demonstrate their command of their fields and their preparation to undertake dissertation research. The portfolio should be prepared with this purpose in mind.

The portfolio examination demonstrates that post-MA students in the Department have:

1. Acquired the appropriate knowledge base,
2. Developed the skills that will allow them:
  - a. To identify a research question,
  - b. To complete the dissertation successfully,
  - c. To become competent and responsible teachers, researchers, and writers, and
  - d. To embark on a lifetime of constant learning and continued scholarly evolution, regardless of their career path.

The portfolio examination provides post-MA students with an opportunity to:

1. Take stock of their achievements, strengths, and weaknesses,
2. Reflect on the quality of their progress through the program, and
3. Outline their future intellectual or career trajectory.

The portfolio should contain the following items:

**[0.] Table of Contents**

**I. The Curriculum Vitae**

1. The CV outlines the student's professional biography to date and shows the student's ability to present the academic self.
2. If appropriate, the student may also include a résumé, which shows the student's ability to present the professional self.

**II. Documentation of Learning.**

Purpose: The student must demonstrate her/his acquisition of field knowledge and possession of the skills to advance to the dissertation stage and then into the academy or a profession. To demonstrate this, the student will 1) **compile an annotated readings bibliography**, 2) **submit a synthetic essay**, 3) demonstrate through testing the ability to use the **foreign language or languages** studied, and 4) successfully complete an **oral examination**.

1. **Annotated bibliography** of seminal critical works pertaining to the student's primary period/area of interest.

- a) The bibliography should contain a few sentences describing the main objectives of each critical work

- b) The bibliography should be considerably broader than the one appended to the dissertation prospectus (see below)

2. **Synthetic essay.** (7000–7500 words). The student and the Supervisory Committee may think of this as the equivalent of survey chapter in a book or the introductory portion of an advanced lecture on the topic. The topic of the synthetic essay is decided by the student’s Supervisory Committee, in collaboration with the student. In the synthetic essay the student should:

- a) Cover a period, a theme, or a genre outside her or his immediate area of expertise.
- b) Give a coherent and intelligent summary, supported with references to relevant primary and secondary sources for that period, theme, genre, etc.,
- c) Demonstrate control of a research area outside the student’s special field of interest.
- d) Some examples of possible topics: the genres of Old Rus’ literature, the prose of the eighteenth century, the ode in Russian poetry, the early stages in the development of Russian women’s writing (18th—19th century), three centuries of peasants in Russian literature, a comparative look at Russian and European Romanticism, the role of translation in the development of the Russian literary canon, etc. As currently Russian literature is the only primary literary concentration offered in the Department at the Ph.D. level, essays on interdisciplinary and cross-national/cross-regional topics are especially welcome, but require prior approval by the Supervisory Committee.

### III. Documentation of Ability to Undertake Research

The student must demonstrate that she or he has acquired the research, critical thinking, and complex writing skills to succeed at the dissertation stage and beyond. Documentation of research includes:

1. **Analytical (original research) essay** on a topic chosen with the advisor (6500–7000 words) [article].

- a) This should be an essay with a broad scope that contributes to existing scholarship.
- b) The essay should be written with complete scholarly apparatus, edited, and presented in polished and “publishable” form (ideally, you should have submitted or be ready to submit the work to an academic journal).

2. A **statement of research interests** (circa 1000 words).

3. A **dissertation prospectus** (4000–5000 words) with a **bibliography** and an **abstract** (150–300 words).

4. **Other document(s)** that the Supervisory Committee and the student agree should be included, such as:

- a) **sample post-M.A. research essays;**
- b) **conference papers/abstracts**, if any;
- c) **book reviews;** and
- d) **any other publications or works under consideration.**

### IV. Documentation of Teaching

The student must demonstrate that she or he has acquired appropriate teaching skills, mastered appropriate pedagogical strategies, and thought reflectively about the nature, purpose, and methods

of teaching. This section includes:

1. Syllabi of courses taught
2. Samples of teaching materials developed, if relevant (exams, handouts, exercises, Blackboard materials)
3. Teaching observations and student evaluations from all courses taught.
4. **TWO** course syllabi developed by the student:
  - a) A survey course for your period/area of concentration
  - b) A specialized seminar on materials from your research area
5. Statement of teaching philosophy (1000–1500 words)
  - a) Discuss any courses taught
  - b) Discuss your teaching style and how it might have evolved
  - c) Discuss any core principles that guide or motivate your teaching style (e.g. do you believe in the Socratic method; do you prefer to lecture; or, do you use a combination of the two)
  - d) Address any successful teaching strategies/methods
  - e) Discuss teaching aspirations (preferred type of a future teaching institution/environment)
  - f) Mention any courses you would like to have the opportunity to teach
6. Any other document(s) that the Supervisory Committee and the student agree should be included.

#### **V. Documentation of Professional Development (as relevant)**

In today's competitive job environment, the student must demonstrate that she or he has acquired the skills necessary to traverse the profession independently. This section includes:

1. Grant proposals (whether funded or not), if such exist,
2. Digital Humanities work (if relevant to the profile),
3. List of Professional Development activities attended during the period of PhD coursework, with comments (workshops, public lectures attended, study or research abroad, internships, special projects, etc.)
4. Mock cover letter for an academic job in your field of specialization (1.5–2 pages, single-spaced)
  - a) Include mock sample job description to which the letter is tailored
  - b) Discuss your dissertation and other research interests and accomplishments
  - c) Discuss teaching experience and teaching interests at the hiring institution
5. Sample recommendation letters for undergraduate students (the student's identity may remain anonymous).
6. List of conference panels/roundtables and other academic events organized (if relevant).
7. Any other document that the Supervisory Committee and the student agree should be included.

#### **VI. Other Evidence of Professionalization and Achievement**

1. The portfolio should document as completely as possible the student's achievements and their relationship to the student's professional goals.
2. This portion of the portfolio holds any other item/s that the student chooses to include or that the Supervisory Committee may choose to require in the case of a particular student's profile.

#### **VII. The Oral Examination**

Following completion of coursework, students present the Portfolio formally to their committee through the process described below. By this time, they must have fulfilled all requirements for the PhD established by the Department and Graduate Studies with the exception of the Comprehensive Oral Exam, the 18 credit hours of dissertation research, and the dissertation itself. If students meet

these criteria, they proceed to the Comprehensive Oral Examination required by the Department and Graduate Studies.

The 2-hour Comprehensive Oral Examination follows the formal submission of the portfolio (see the section “Submission of the Portfolio and the Comprehensive Oral Examination” below). The oral examination demonstrates the student’s ability to:

- a) Defend the choice and direction of the dissertation concept,
- b) Respond intelligently and professionally in an oral interview situation on any academic topic,
- c) Engage spontaneously in a professional exchange of ideas.

Students should first arrange with their Examination Committee members a mutually convenient date and time for the oral examination. Then students should provide this information to the Graduate Administrator. At the same time, candidates deposit the portfolio electronically in a digital venue specified by the committee and make it available to all graduate faculty of the Department. The Graduate Administrator will process the paperwork with the Office of Graduate Studies and arrange for a room for the exam. **Arrangements must be completed at least four weeks prior to the scheduled date of the oral exam.**

Prior to the oral exam, the committee will examine the portfolio’s contents carefully. The oral examination has two emphases:

- A review of the student’s program as expressed in the portfolio and a test of the student’s ability to define clearly and express coherently the state of the fields; that is, certification of the student’s competency in major and minor fields;
- The presentation of the dissertation proposal and an exposition of its anticipated contribution to the student’s fields.

This allows the faculty to check on any gaps or weaknesses in the portfolio, and allows the student to present her or his concept and time line for the final stage of the student’s graduate training. The Examination Committee reports a grade of Honors, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory.

### VIII. General Issues

- Students must meet the Research Skills requirement (as stipulated in the Graduate Catalog) in a non-Slavic foreign language (usually French or German) prior to Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations. Additionally, as specified in the Department’s M.A. regulations, students planning to continue beyond the M.A. should begin study of a second Slavic language during the period of M.A. work, normally during the first semester of the second year of study. By the time of the submission of the portfolio, students must demonstrate reading competence (equivalent to 2 years of formal language study) in a second Slavic language through a written test. Students should also demonstrate general knowledge of a second Slavic language’s literature and culture (3 graduate credit hours) at the oral exam.
- The student names her or his Supervisory Committee of at least three graduate faculty members, two of whom are the primary advisor and the instructor of the second Slavic language and culture, immediately following the successful conclusion of the MA-PhD Qualifying Exam. If the student has a second minor field in addition to the second Slavic language and culture and that field is intellectually relevant to the dissertation, one of these three members may be from the second minor field. The student may change members of

the Supervisory Committee in consultation with departmental Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies.

- The student may begin work on the portfolio essays and organization at any point during the period of PhD coursework under the direction of the Supervisory Committee. Students are encouraged to begin as early as possible so that they have time to take full advantage of breaks and vacations and to edit, revise, and polish their work. Time management, project planning, setting priorities, and working on multiple projects are an important part of this process.
- All essays must have an appropriate scholarly apparatus, be carefully edited, and be presented in a format “suitable for submission,” i.e., as though for publication in a scholarly journal.
- The portfolio examination demands articulation with the curriculum, not only in terms of subject matter, but also in terms of a) concept, b) objectives, and c) assignments that follow the concept and help achieve these objectives. Such assignments prepare students for the portfolio process and may be incorporated into the portfolio.
- The portfolio examination is the result of significant mentorship of the student by three or more graduate faculty members who serve on her/his Supervisory Committee, especially from the Advisor. The Supervisory Committee, in consultation with the student, determines and approves the essay topics, ensures that the student remains on track and meets portfolio requirements in a timely manner, and assists the student as needed in writing, selecting, preparing, and posting materials for the portfolio.
- The Supervisory Committee engages regularly with the student from the time that the student completes the PhD Qualifying Examination until the student defends the dissertation. The student meets regularly with the Supervisory Committee as they agree to assess progress and to set timetable targets for submission of the portfolio.
- The formation of the Examination Committee remains as stated in the Department’s Guidelines and Operating Procedures (<http://slavic.ku.edu/guidelines-and-operating-procedures-ku-slavic-department>).
- Students who entered the program before 1 August 2012 or received the MA degree before that date may choose either to take the timed written exams or to work with the portfolio model.

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1. **Annotated bibliography** of seminal critical works pertaining to the student's primary research area of interest.
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- b) The bibliography should be considerably broader than the one appended to the dissertation prospectus (see below)

2. **Synthetic essay.** (7000–7500 words). The student and the Supervisory Committee may think of this as the equivalent of survey chapter in a book or the introductory portion of an advanced lecture on the topic. The topic of the synthetic essay is decided by the student’s Supervisory Committee, in collaboration with the student. The synthetic essay should be diachronic if the student’s specialty is synchronic, and vice-versa. In the synthetic essay the student should:

- a) Cover a research theme outside her or his immediate area of expertise.
- b) Give a coherent and intelligent summary, supported with references to relevant primary and secondary sources for that theme, etc.,
- c) Demonstrate control of a research area outside the student’s special field of interest.
- d) Some examples of possible topics: the main changes from Indo-European to Slavic, the diatopy of Slavic through major isoglosses, case studies of the degree of success of the enforcement of language policy, differences in the case systems of two or more Slavic languages, differences in the verbal systems of two or more Slavic languages, differences in the case systems of two or more Slavic languages; differences in the verbal systems of two or more Slavic languages, specific issues in pragmatics of one or more Slavic languages, interaction between morphology/syntax and narrative structure of one or more Slavic languages; many of these topics can accommodate comparative consideration of Slavic and another area language of concentration (e.g. Yiddish).

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- a) This should be an essay with a broad scope that contributes to existing scholarship.
- b) The essay should be written with complete scholarly apparatus, edited, and presented in polished and “publishable” form (ideally, you should have submitted or be ready to submit the work to an academic journal).
- c) The linguistics research essay should document the student’s ability to work with data, as appropriate for the concentration and dissertation topic. This includes issues like data collection, ethics, human subjects as applicable, work with corpora (synchronic and diachronic), statistics if applicable, etc.

2. A **statement of research interests** (circa 1000 words).

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  - a) Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the structure and history of **two Slavic languages**, one of which is considered the student’s primary Slavic language, plus reading competence in a **third Slavic language** (to cover all three language families, East, West, and South Slavic); reading competence in non-primary Slavic languages is evaluated through a written test.

- b) Demonstrate oral and written competence in the student's primary Slavic language;
- c) Complete 9 graduate credit hours in a minor subject, taken from inside or outside the Department;
- d) Demonstrate basic knowledge of general linguistics and comparative Slavic linguistics;
- The student names her or his Supervisory Committee of at least three graduate faculty members, one of whom is the primary advisor, immediately following the successful conclusion of the MA-PhD Qualifying Exam. If the minor field is intellectually relevant to the dissertation, one of these three members may be from the minor field. The student may change members of the Supervisory Committee in consultation with departmental Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies.
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