Ph.D. Field Exam Guidelines
Old English Examination

Major Field Exam

Students wishing to take the major field examination in Old English should compose a list based on the Reading List for the Field Examination in Old English. Appended to the list of required primary works is a supplemental list of between 25 and 50 items selected in consultation with the committee. Candidates are expected to show substantial knowledge of a range of scholarly writings in the field of Old English.

The major field examination in Old English is a four-and-one-half-hour exam in two parts, 8:45 a.m.–11:15 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m:

Part I (taken in common by all students)
Technical material (e.g. philology, manuscripts), translation and grammatical analysis (Beowulf) 1 ½ hours
Commentary on an Old English text 1 hour

Part II (individually designated for each student)
Two essay questions on primary and secondary texts from the student’s list. Choice given. 2 hours

The student should demonstrate that she or he has mastered the primary and supplementary works on the list, and the critical tradition as represented by the list, by writing clear, responsive answers to the questions posed.

Minor Field Exam

Students wishing to take the minor field examination in Old English should compose a list based on the Reading List for the Minor Field Examination in Old English. In addition to choosing the required primary works candidates must provide for approval a list of 15–20 items chosen for their relevance to the primary texts selected by the candidate. The number of items on a given supplemental list will be closer to 10 if the works are book-length and closer to 20 if articles predominate.

The examination will last two and one half hours, 8:45 a.m.–11:15 a.m. The first half hour will be devoted to Old English language, focusing on the ability to translate Old English into Modern English prose and to comment on the linguistic and grammatical features of the passage to be translated.

The remainder of the examination will be devoted to answering questions on Old English literature, broadly conceived. Questions may focus on the area of the material represented in the student’s list. The student should demonstrate that he or she has mastered the primary and supplemental works on the list, and the critical tradition as represented by the list, by writing clear, responsive answers to the questions posed.
Candidates planning to take the field examination in Old English will compose a list of works in consultation with the members of their examination committee. The following reading list outlines the required categories of texts for the examination, indicating both mandatory texts (marked with an asterisk) and options for student selection. In addition to making individual choices within the set list, candidates will prepare a supplemental list of primary and secondary readings selected from their area of particular concentration. When they make their lists, candidates will specify the particular editions to be used for their study and for the examination. A brief written rationale for their selections should accompany the completed examination list.

Candidates for this examination should be able to demonstrate substantial knowledge of the mandatory and selected Old English texts on their lists.

**The Nowell Codex:** *Beowulf*; and at least one of the following: *Judith, Marvels of the East, The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*

*The Battle of Maldon*

**The Exeter Book:** *The Wanderer; The Seafarer; Deor; Wulf and Eadwacer; The Wife’s Lament*; and at least two of the following: The Riddles; The Advent Lyrics; *Guthlac (A & B)*

**The Junius Manuscript:** *Exodus; and at least one other poem*

**The Vercelli Book:** *The Dream of the Rood*; plus at least one other poem; and at least two homilies

**Cynewulf:** *Juliana; and at least one other poem*

**Alfredian Prose:** Soliloquies (at least one book); Boethius (at least ten chapters); Pastoral Rule (at least ten chapters); *OE Oriosius* (at least one book)

**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:** select the entire text as preserved in at least one manuscript

**Ælfric:** Catholic Homilies I and II (select at least four homilies); Lives of Saints (select at least four saints’ Lives)

**Archbishop Wulfstan:** *Homilies* (the *Sermo Lupi* and at least three other homilies)

**Secondary Literature:** Candidates are expected to show substantial knowledge of a range of scholarly writings on the field of Old English (to be chosen in consultation with the committee).
I. Candidates for this examination should be able to demonstrate substantial knowledge of a range of Old English texts; this range includes all verse texts listed under ‘a’, one of the texts listed under ‘b’, and two of the prose texts listed under ‘c’:

a.  
Beowulf  
The Battle of Maldon  
The Wanderer  
The Seafarer  
Deor  
Wulf and Eadwacer  
The Wife’s Lament  
The Dream of the Rood  
Cynewulf, Juliana

b. at least one of the following:

The Exeter Book Riddles  
Judith  
Guthlac A & B  
Genesis A  
Genesis B  
Exodus  
Cynewulf, Elene

c. at least two of the following:

Ælfric, Catholic Homilies (select one homily)  
Ælfric, Lives of Saints (select one)  
Abp. Wulfstan (select one homily)  
Prose of the reign of Alfred  
(for which select one of the following: Soliloquies [at least one book]; Boethius [at least ten chapters]; Pastoral Rule [at least ten chapters]; Orosius [at least one book])  
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (one version)

II. Candidates must provide for approval a list of approximately 20 items chosen for their relevance to the texts in item I selected by the candidate.