

MPHIL / PHD RESEARCH FIELDS

Research Fields (or their equivalent, sometimes called Qualifying, Candidacy, or Comprehensive Exams in other universities) are norms at every major North American institution. They consist in lists of prescribed texts designed to acquaint candidates with the key readings in areas of research directly related to their dissertation. For example, a candidate writing a dissertation on Walcott's poetry, might choose to do research fields in 'West Indian Literature' and 'British and American Poetry.' Successful completion of the fields may also function to demonstrate a candidate's competence to teach courses in the areas in question at the tertiary level.

Students should note that the research fields represent only surveys of the key readings in the areas in question and are not a substitute for the topic-specific readings necessary for producing a dissertation. Students consistently report that the experience of doing the fields has been an immensely rewarding one, forcing them to engage with texts they might not otherwise have even considered, deepening the knowledge of particular fields which they thought they possessed, and in many cases significantly altering how they initially conceived of their projected research.

Research Fields are not to be confused with the Independent Reading Courses. The latter can, in exceptional cases and subject to approval, be taken in order to fulfil course work requirements at the MA and MPhil levels in lieu of the taught courses (see MPHIL / PHD INDEPENDENT READING COURSES).

The fields are coded 70A Research Field I and 70B Research Field II, respectively. For example, a candidate for the PhD in Post-colonial and Other Literatures in English might register for E70A: Research Field I: West Indian Literature.

- Candidates for the MPhil degree must complete one such field (70A) in an area of research pertinent to their thesis.
- Candidates for the PhD degree must complete two such fields (70A and 70B), or one field (70B) if one (70A) has previously been completed at the MPhil level (see REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MPHIL DEGREE and REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHD DEGREE).

Assessment: Research Fields are normally examined by means of a combination of some of the following exercises mutually agreed upon by both candidate and supervisor:

- seminar / conference presentation(s),
- an annotated bibliography,
- a portfolio of three x 15-20 page research papers or four x 10-15 page research papers (that should aim between them to cover between them as much of the field as possible),
- officially auditing a relevant course(s) and fulfilling all requirements agreed upon by lecturer and candidate,
- an oral examination(s),
- a written examination(s),
- other suitable mechanisms.

This assessment will be conducted by a panel consisting of the supervisor and at least one other member of staff with expertise in the field.