

Fundamentals Senior Examination

The Senior Exam is the final capstone project in the Fundamentals program. It provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on your journey in the major, reconsider the evolution of your intellectual interests, and engage in a structured reexamination of your Fundamentals question. For this exam, you will write two essays: one responding to a prompt related to your Fundamentals question (the “Question Question” or QQ), and another one responding to a prompt about one of the specific texts you will be listing in your Senior Exam Worksheet (the “Text Question” or TQ).

Brief Timeline

- **Friday, February 20, 2026, 5:00 PM (Week 7, Winter):** Submit Senior Examination Form.
- **Spring Quarter Registration:** Sign up for the Senior Exam reading course (FNDL 29902).
- **Friday, April 24, 2026, 9:00 AM (Week 5, Spring):** Receive the Senior Exam questions.
- **Monday, April 27, 2026, 9:00 AM (Week 6, Spring):** Submit your two essays on Canvas.
- **Relax and take a day to celebrate;** you’re done with the final capstone of Fundamentals!

Preparation: Senior Examination Form

Ideally, the Senior Examination is not just an assessment, but an opportunity to explore and engage with the questions that truly interest you. This is where the **Senior Examination Form** comes in. It’s your chance to signal to the examiners the kind of questions you’d like to be asked about each text. The more specific your responses to this form, the more guidance you’ll be providing to your examiners in crafting the question. This way, the process becomes more of a conversation with your examiner, and you may find their feedback at the end more relevant to your intellectual process.

The form, which you can find on the Fundamentals website, asks you for the most current version of your **Fundamentals Question**, along with a **600–800-word Question Statement** explaining how your approach to this question has developed. Be sure to submit a **new version** of your Question Statement—one that reflects the evolution of your thinking. You cannot recycle previous versions, such as the one you submitted in your Fundamentals application or past Conference Review Worksheets.

You’ll also need to include six paragraphs, each discussing one of the texts you’ve chosen for your Senior Exam. In each paragraph, explain how the text relates to your question, and whether it poses particular challenges or suggests new directions for exploration. A strong paragraph should be approximately ten well-developed sentences. The form also asks you to suggest examiners for each of your texts. Note that only University of Chicago faculty—**not** graduate students, postdocs, or visiting professors—can serve as your examiners. Typically, the faculty members are from Fundamentals, though there may be exceptions.

Submit your **Senior Examination Form** and **Question Statement** to Canvas **by Friday, February 20, 2026, 5:00 PM (Week 7 of Winter Quarter)**.

FNDL 29902: Fundamentals Senior Examination

During Spring quarter registration, be sure to sign up for the **Senior Exam reading course (FNDL 29902)**. This course provides dedicated time in your schedule for reading, reviewing, and analyzing the six texts you've chosen, while also giving you space to reflect on your question in light of these texts. There are no scheduled meetings for this course, but it's important to use the time effectively to create a structured plan for your exam preparation. If examiners or your Fundamentals advisors are available for office hours, consider scheduling a few meetings to discuss your progress and explore your specific interests related to your Question and texts. You might also consider meeting regularly with peers in the program to discuss your ideas, refine close readings of select passages, sharpen your concepts, and develop more nuanced insights.

The Examination

For your Senior Exam, you will receive four questions: one **“Question” Question (QQ)**, which asks you to reflect on your Fundamentals question in conversation with one or more of the texts on your list, and three **Text Questions (TQ)**, each focused on a particular text from your list. You **must** answer the “Question” Question and choose **one** of the three Text Questions to respond to. Each essay should be **8-10 pages long, double-spaced**.

The “Question” Question will be formulated either by your adviser or by the Fundamentals program chair if your adviser is unavailable. The author of the question will be the reader of your essay, so it is essential that you address the prompt directly.

The Text Questions will be written by faculty members familiar with your intellectual project and the texts on your list. You must choose one question from the three Text Questions to answer. The faculty member who formulated the question you choose will evaluate your essay.

Please submit your essays as two separate Word documents through the Canvas assignment page and name your files as follows:

- Last Name, First Name, SE QQ.docx (for the “Question” Question essay)
- Last Name, First Name, SE TQ.docx (for the Text Question essay)

You may not confer with other students or your adviser while working on your exam essays.

The Senior Exam will be distributed via email at **9:00 AM on Friday, April 24**, and your essays are due by **9:00 AM on Monday, April 27**.

The date of the Senior Exam cannot be changed, but exceptions may be made for religious obligations or extraordinary circumstances that cannot be worked around, provided you submit official documentation. If permission is granted to reschedule, the new dates will be as close to the original exam times as possible, typically within a few days, not weeks.