To fulfill the exam requirement, all students in the literature concentration must submit a portfolio to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in their final semester; at the beginning of that semester, the DGS will let students know the due date. The anonymized portfolio will be evaluated by a committee of three faculty members in literature. The portfolio is assessed on a pass/fail basis. If the student fails the portfolio, they may revise and re-submit it the following semester. Students may not receive the degree if they fail the portfolio more than once. The portfolio will contain the following two components:

1. Three unrevised research papers submitted in graduate literature courses, with the prompts or assignment descriptions attached. The three papers will have been written for three different literature professors. The papers will be clean copies (i.e., no professor’s comments). The total number of pages of this portion of the portfolio is 30-60 pages (including notes and works cited).
2. One reflective essay of 12-15 pages (or 4000-5000 words), that accomplishes the following:
   1. Avoid a simple autobiographical account, including a discussion of how much they enjoyed writing particular papers or taking particular classes.
   2. Demonstrate awareness of the discipline and practices of literary and cultural studies as a field. To do so, place your critical interventions within the context of the discipline, indicating how they address current scholarly issues and/or debates. Students are welcome to engage with recent scholarship that played or continues to play an important role in their understanding of the texts they are writing about. The paper should also discuss how sources were selected and used for each paper.
   3. Include a variety of aspects connected to how you planned the work you include in the portfolio and how you executed it. What does that process look like in retrospect? These elements will include, but are not limited to: theoretical frameworks you employed as you produced this work; ways you approached close reading, and what formal/aesthetic elements you focused on (remember close reading is not simply “reading attentively and in detail”); what elements are most prominent in your work; and how your work is framed in terms of history, geography, identity, or other ways. Every portfolio will be different, but the more you can incorporate these dimensions, the richer your reflection will be.
   4. Establish an intellectual trajectory across the three papers, bringing them into conversation with one another through a particular research methodology or theoretical framework (which may mean close reading, intersectionality, a particular school of theory, etc.), a general question, or an approach to literary studies. The papers should be contextualized within the broader framework of the student’s master’s-level study of literature and culture. It should indicate how the student thinks differently about these three papers, in retrospect, and how they might bring each paper to the next scholarly stage; this development should push beyond writing mechanics and the feedback they received from faculty in order to consider substantive changes. Keeping in mind that we are continually evolving as scholars, the student should consider what may have been left out of an analysis that could now be included.
   5. Conclude by discussing the value of the work completed as an M.A. student of literature at UNC Charlotte. How does the student see themself as a literary scholar at this point??