

The PhD Candidacy Examination procedure in EAS (Updated April 2007)

A doctoral candidacy examination is taken by PhD candidates. It is an oral examination that addresses general knowledge relevant to the chosen topic of thesis research. A thesis proposal is an EAS requirement additional to the FGSR regulations which govern the examination (see below).

The thesis proposal is received in advance of the exam, and deemed satisfactory (or not) independently of the performance during oral questioning. The EAS candidacy requirement is met when both criteria of 1) satisfactory thesis proposal and 2) satisfactory performance at the examination are satisfied.

The candidacy requirement is not met if the examination committee, either unanimously or with one dissenting vote, finds that either the proposal or the exam performance is unsatisfactory. The outcome in this case is either a conditional pass or a failure (see below).

The standard of the doctoral candidacy examination is the same across the University. As stated in the FGSR's regulations (<http://gradfile.fgsro.ualberta.ca/gradmanual/eight.htm>):

"Students must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committee that they possess:

- **an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the thesis; and**
- **the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level."**

The examination determines whether the student is adequately prepared to continue as a doctoral student. The examination committee makes its decision using the two criteria above.

The oral candidacy examination is not an examination of the EAS thesis proposal. Students should be prepared for questions in areas related to and wider than the proposal, and examiners shall test comprehensive knowledge in such areas.

The Examination Committee

The examination committee consists of the supervisory committee and at least two other full-time faculty members. At least one member is from a department other than the one in which the research is being carried out. No more than two adjunct and/or emeritus professors, who serve as Departmental members, may be members of the examination committee. If an adjunct professor is not a full time faculty member or a member of the supervisory committee, they serve as an additional member, and do not meet the requirement of one of the "two other faculty members" (see first sentence).

The supervisor makes arrangements for the examination. In the absence of the supervisor, the Associate Chair will make arrangements. It is the candidate's responsibility to become familiar with departmental procedures of the examination. These are described below; the supervisor or Associate Chair can be consulted for additional information.

The examination requires submission of a research proposal not to exceed 2,500 words. The proposal should outline the problem being addressed or gap in knowledge to be filled, review previous published work, and propose methods for solution. The proposal is submitted not less than two weeks before the examination. The proposal is used as a general basis for questions at the oral examination.

The Examination

The examination is chaired by the EAS Associate Chair or designate; if the Associate Chair is a member of the supervisory committee, then another faculty member of the Department can be appointed as chair.

If the examination chair is not a member of the examination committee, then the chair does not vote on the exam outcome.

The role of the chair is to:

- Review the procedure of the exam for the student before beginning.
- Ensure that the candidate has adequate opportunity (e. g, comprehension, time, and materials) to answer questions.
- Ensure that each member of the examining committee has adequate opportunity to question the candidate.
- Ensure that only questions are addressed to the candidate, and that examiners do not inform, lecture, or otherwise influence the candidate, or debate with each other. The chair rules on whether questions are relevant.
- Remind the committee of what exam results are possible (see below).
- Inform the candidate and FGSR of the result of the examination.

At the start of the examination, with the candidate absent, the supervisor outlines the candidate's academic background, courses taken for the degree, grades, and information relevant to program progress. The order of questioning is established by the chair. With the candidate present, the chair outlines the order of questioning. The candidate makes a presentation (not more than 20 minutes) of the planned research and of progress to date. One or more rounds of questions take place. Questioning takes approximately two hours, or until all examiners are satisfied that they can make a decision; the candidate withdraws and a discussion is held.

Persons other than the examiners, such as other graduate students, may attend with the permission of the Dean or the chair of the examination committee. Attendance is subject to the following conditions:

- Permission has been granted by both the candidate and the chair of the examination committee.
- They may be present only when the candidate is in the room.
- They may not be present when the examination committee's decision is conveyed to the candidate.

The Examination result

If all examiners except one vote the same way, the decision is that of the majority.

If there are two or more opposing votes, the case is referred to FGSR with a recommendation from the examining committee or a report from the chair.

The following are the possible results of the exam:

Pass: The proposal and the exam performance are acceptable.

Conditional pass: The proposal is inadequate or the exam performance is marginal. Specific conditions must be met by the student to pass, for example additional course work, directed study, or revised thesis proposal. A deadline is set and a mechanism for evaluation is specified (see Graduate Handbook and FGSR web site for details).

Failure: Either the proposal or the exam performance is inadequate.

If the result is a failure, the committee adds one of the following recommendations to FGSR: 1) permission to repeat the exam within six months, 2) change of category to a master's program, or 3) termination of the program.