



PhD Candidacy Examination

For Graduate Students, Graduate Program Staff and Graduate Faculty
Effective September 2012 term

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INTRODUCTION

Each student in a doctoral program is required to prepare a written research proposal and pass a candidacy exam. Full-time students are expected to do so within 18 months of their initial registration in the program. The examination is to determine whether the candidate has the appropriate knowledge and expertise to undertake a thesis in the selected field of study.

A candidacy committee conducts the examination. This committee consists of the following members:

- The student's supervisor(s).
- At least two additional members from the student's supervisory committee (the student's supervisory committee must be established prior to the oral examination).
- Graduate program director (or delegate) as chair. The chair cannot be a member of the student's supervisory committee.
- An external examiner from outside the program who is not involved with the student's course of study. This external examiner is appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies in consultation with the graduate program director.

All members of the committee are voting members. In the case of co-supervision, co-supervisors collectively have one vote.

The candidacy committee must be established at least four weeks prior to the exam. The candidacy examination comprises the following:

1. A written thesis proposal which must be distributed to the candidacy committee at least four full weeks prior to the examination date. The thesis proposal demonstrates:

- i. The student's mastery of the relevant background knowledge, including an appropriate breadth of knowledge in the discipline.
- ii. A coherent and achievable research plan that will result in an original contribution.

2. An oral presentation of the PhD thesis proposal (preferably 20 minutes and not to exceed 30 minutes), followed by open questioning of the candidate by the candidacy committee to ascertain the readiness of the candidate to carry out the proposed research.

At the end of the oral exam, the chair asks the candidate to leave and the candidacy committee meets in closed session. The candidacy committee deliberates and makes a judgment of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A written report is prepared by the chair, signed by all committee members and submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies with copies to the members of the candidacy committee. The results are communicated to the student by the chair of the committee.

Policy Reference: Section 3.8.1 in the Graduate Academic Calendar

THE CANDIDACY COMMITTEE

Established by: Graduate program director, in consultation with the student's supervisor(s) or supervisory committee

When? At least 4 weeks prior to the scheduled exam

Composition of Committee:

At least 4 voting members, including:

- the student's research supervisor(s)
- at least 2 additional members from the student's supervisory committee
- an external examiner from outside the program who is not involved with the student's course of study
- a chair (GPD or delegate) – the chair cannot be a member of the student's supervisory committee

Note: In the case of co-supervision, co-supervisors collectively have one vote.

External Committee Member: The external member is appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The GPD submits a nomination to the Dean of Graduate Studies (DOGS) and provides a rationale for the nominee's inclusion on the committee. If the DOGS approves the nomination, the signed form is scanned and copies are sent to the GPD and the chair of the candidacy committee.

STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisor(s) and Supervisory Committee

- Provide guidelines for the student for the written report and expectations re: the oral presentation and offer guidance/feedback as required during their preparation
- Inform graduate program director (GPD) that student is ready to proceed to the candidacy exam and collaborate with student and GPD to establish date for exam
- Advise student to register for candidacy exam course at the beginning of the term in which the exam is scheduled

Student

- Consult with his/her research supervisor(s)/supervisory committee about guidelines for preparation of the written research proposal and the oral examination
- Solicit regular feedback from the research supervisor(s)/supervisory committee during the preparation of the thesis proposal
- provide the required number of copies of the written research proposal to the GPS at least 4 weeks before the scheduled exam date

Graduate Program Director

- Consults with student's supervisory committee to appoint the candidacy committee and nominates the external examiner
- In consultation with the student and committee members, schedules a date, time and location for the exam and informs all parties
- distributes copies of the student's proposal to all members of the candidacy committee at least 4 weeks before the scheduled exam date
- informs candidacy committee members of their responsibilities and provides a copy of the form they are required to complete to prepare for the exam (*PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member's Report form*)

Candidacy Committee Members

- Review the student's materials thoroughly
- Using the *PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member's Report form*, prepare in advance a detailed written report which addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the student's written work, makes recommendations for improvement and suggests resources which may support the student's work
- Provide a copy of the report to the student at the time of the examination
- Prepare questions to determine the student's knowledge of the thesis topic and readiness to conduct the proposed research

Dean of Graduate Studies

- Approves the nominee for external examiner

PROCEDURES FOR CANDIDACY EXAM

Before the Oral Exam

1. The student and his supervisor(s) inform the GPD when they wish to initiate the exam procedure.
2. The GPD confirms the student's eligibility for the candidacy examination, establishes the candidacy committee and proposes a date for the oral examination.
3. The GPD completes the *Appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee* form, including nomination of external examiner, and submits to the Dean of Graduate Studies.
4. The Dean of Graduate Studies signs form to signify approval of appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee and returns form to GPD (copies graduate program staff).
5. The supervisory committee provides the candidate with guidelines for the written report and outlines expectations for the oral presentation.
6. The graduate program staff or supervisor advises the student to register for the candidacy exam course at the beginning of the term in which the exam is to be scheduled.
7. The student prepares and submits the required documents to the graduate program staff no less than 5 weeks in advance of the exam.
8. 4 weeks in advance of the exam, the graduate program staff confirms the date and location of the exam for all parties and distributes the materials to the committee members, including copies of *PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member's Report* form.

On Day of the Exam

1. The graduate program staff arranges room for presentation and provides chair of candidacy committee with copy of form – *PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision*.
2. The student makes an oral presentation (preferably 20 minutes and not to exceed 30 minutes). The presentation will summarize those parts of the student’s written report that s/he feels to be most significant. This will be followed by an open questioning of the student by the committee members.
3. The student is then asked to leave and the committee meets in closed session. The committee deliberates and evaluates the student’s work as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
4. The chair oversees the preparation of a written report using the *PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision* form and ensures that it is signed by all committee members.
5. The student is invited to return and the chair informs the student of the committee’s decision and, if required, any follow-up actions. The student is provided with copies of the individual *Committee Member’s Forms*.

After the Exam

The graduate program staff scans the completed *PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision* form and provides copies to the student, all members of the committee and the Office of Graduate Studies.

The student’s supervisor or GPD enters the student’s mark (pass or fail) for the candidacy exam course in the program.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE EXAM

A judgment of satisfactory allows the student to proceed with PhD studies.

If the judgment is unsatisfactory, the student is required to retake the exam within four months. For a second exam, the examination team must include an additional member of the graduate faculty who was not involved in the original examination.

A judgment of satisfactory in a second exam allows the student to proceed with his/her studies. If a student receives an unsatisfactory judgment in a second attempt at a candidacy exam, or if a student does not retake the candidacy exam within four months after an unsatisfactory first attempt, the student shall receive a grade of Fail and be dismissed from the PhD program.

TRANSFER FROM A THESIS-BASED MASTER'S TO A PhD PROGRAM

This transfer option is for exceptional students who have demonstrated superior academic credentials and outstanding research potential in their master's degree program.

Applicants are considered on a case-by-case basis and may not be considered at all in some programs. If a transfer from a master's degree to a PhD degree is allowed in a program, the following criteria must be met before a transfer from a master's to a PhD program can be considered:

1. Completion of a full master's program of course work with at least an A-minus average.
2. Significant progress in the student's master's research project.
3. Strong evidence of ability for advanced independent research.
4. Approval of the transfer by the research supervisor(s), supervisory committee, the graduate program director and the dean of Graduate Studies.
5. Satisfactory completion of the PhD candidacy exam.

A judgment of satisfactory in the candidacy exam allows the student to transfer from a master's to a PhD. Upon transferring, the student must fulfill all other requirements for the PhD.

If the judgment is unsatisfactory, the student will continue in the master's program. There will be only one examination allowed for the transfer from a master's to a PhD.

PROCEDURES FOR TRANSFER FROM MASTER'S TO PhD CANDIDACY EXAM

Before the Oral Exam

1. The student and his supervisor(s) inform the GPD that they would like to transfer from the Master's program to the PhD program. The Supervisory Committee and GPD fill out the *Approval to Transfer from Master's to PhD* form. The student and his supervisor(s) also inform the GPD when they wish to initiate the exam procedure.
2. The GPD confirms the student's eligibility for the candidacy examination, establishes the candidacy committee and proposes a date for the oral examination.
3. The GPD completes the *Appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee* form, including nomination of external examiner, and submits to the Dean of Graduate Studies.
4. The Dean of Graduate Studies signs form to signify approval of appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee and returns form to GPD (copies graduate program staff).
5. The supervisory committee provides the candidate with guidelines for the written report and outlines expectations for the oral presentation.
6. The graduate program staff or supervisor advises the student to register for the candidacy exam course at the beginning of the term in which the exam is to be scheduled.
7. The student prepares and submits the required documents to the graduate program staff no less than 5 weeks in advance of the exam.
8. 4 weeks in advance of the exam, the graduate program staff confirms the date and location of the exam for all parties and distributes the materials to the committee members, including copies of *PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member's Report* form.

On Day of the Exam

1. The graduate program staff arranges room for presentation and provides chair of candidacy committee with copy of form – *PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision*.
2. The student makes an oral presentation (preferably 20 minutes and not to exceed 30 minutes). The presentation will summarize those parts of the student’s written report that s/he feels to be most significant. This will be followed by an open questioning of the student by the committee members.
3. The student is then asked to leave and the committee meets in closed session. The committee deliberates and evaluates the student’s work as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
4. The chair oversees the preparation of a written report using the *PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision* form and ensures that it is signed by all committee members.
5. The student is invited to return and the chair informs the student of the committee’s decision and, if required, any follow-up actions. The student is provided with copies of the individual *Committee Member’s Forms*.

After the Exam

The graduate program staff scans the completed *Approval to Transfer from Master’s to PhD Form, PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision* form and provides copies to the student, all members of the committee and the Office of Graduate Studies.

The student’s supervisor or GPD enters the student’s mark (pass or fail) for the candidacy exam course in the program.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FOR TRANSFER FROM MASTER'S TO PhD EXAM

A judgment of satisfactory in the candidacy exam allows the student to transfer from a master's to a PhD. Upon transferring, the student must fulfill all other requirements for the PhD.

If the judgment is unsatisfactory, the student will continue in the master's program. There will be only one examination allowed for the transfer from a master's to a PhD.

REQUIRED FORMS

All current forms can be found in the public folder: UOIT Graduate Studies Applications – Admin Forms and on the Graduate Studies website as noted below.

http://gradstudies.uoit.ca/current_students/phd-candidacy-exam.php

- **Appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee**
- **PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member’s Report**
- **PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision**
- **Approval to Transfer from Master’s to PhD (if applicable)**

NAME OF FORM	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE	TIMING
<i>Approval to Transfer From Master’s to PhD Form(if applicable)</i>	The Supervisory Committee and GPD sign the form to confirm their approval of the transfer	When oral exam is completed and evaluation determined
<i>Appointment of PhD Candidacy Committee</i>	Prepared by GPD in consultation with student and supervisor(s)/supervisory committee Submitted to Dean of Graduate Studies for approval of nominee for external examiner	Normally within 18 months of student’s initial registration and no less than 4 weeks before date of oral candidacy exam
<i>PhD Candidacy Examination – Committee Member’s Report</i>	Completed as individual reports by all members of candidacy committee in advance of the exam Addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the student’s written work, makes recommendations for improvement and suggests resources which may support the student’s work Each committee member provides a copy of his/her report to the student at the time of the exam	Completed in advance of oral exam in order to be provided to student at the time of exam
<i>PhD Candidacy Examination – Summary of Committee Decision</i>	The chair oversees the completion of this form and ensures that it is signed by all committee members. GPS provides copies to student, members of candidacy committee and Office of Graduate Studies	When oral exam is completed and evaluation determined

