

**Proposed Graduate Academic Calendar Regulation Amendment  
Section – Thesis, Project, Major Paper - PhD Candidacy Exams  
Graduate Studies Committee – April 23, 2019**

**Rationale for proposed changes:** In the past, the academic calendar section on candidacy exams has been silent on the Candidacy Exam member's report, decisions made by majority votes, co-supervision number of votes, attendance of members and if the exam is closed. Our practice was to follow the existing language under Oral examination for master's and doctoral candidate's regulation which has been added below to ensure consistency and clarity. Note: forms will be revised to reflect these changes.

### **PhD candidacy examinations**

Each student in a doctoral program is required to prepare a written thesis 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.
- The external examiner for a candidacy exam has expertise that is relevant to the thesis subject matter and normally is a faculty member at the university with a graduate faculty appointment, although examiners external to the university may be appointed.
- Examiners should not have been an examiner for another PhD student's candidacy exam with the same supervisor within the last year.
- The conflict of interest regulations for external and university examiners in thesis defences also apply to candidacy external examiners (see [conflicts of interest](#) policy).
- The external examiner is appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies in consultation with the graduate program director. A curriculum vitae for the

recommended examiner and a written rationale for the choice must be provided to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

All members of the committee are voting members. In the case of co-supervision, co-supervisors collectively have one vote. The chair of the examining committee is a non-voting member, unless the chair's vote is needed to break a tie.

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. Each Candidacy Committee member will prepare a written report, and will provide an overall evaluation of the written proposal. A copy of each report will be given to the chair by the time of the examination.
3. 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. Normally, the oral presentation is closed.

If a member of the candidacy committee finds that they are unable to attend the oral examination in person or remotely via synchronous participation, the graduate program director should secure a suitable replacement. Should a suitable replacement not be found, the member is asked to submit questions or concerns to be read by the candidacy committee chair at the defence. Normally, no more than two members of the candidacy committee, including the external examiner, may attend the defence remotely. At least one member of the supervisory committee must be physically present. In extraordinary circumstances, the candidacy examination will be rescheduled if one or more members of the candidacy committee are unable to attend. In the case of online programs, alternate arrangements will be permitted.

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. All decisions of the examining committee are made by majority vote. A written report is prepared by the chair, signed by all committee members and is submitted with the committee member's reports to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies with copies to the members of the candidacy committee. The results are communicated to the student by the chair of the committee.

Students who change their research area after successfully passing a candidacy examination must consult with their supervisory committee and may be required to pass another candidacy exam.