

Examination of the PhD Dissertation Proposal: Procedure and Guidelines

To achieve candidacy, an oral examination of the dissertation proposal will take place after successful completion of 1) the required course work, and 2) successful completion of the literature review paper (see **Three Component Requirements for Candidacy document**) and prior to submission of the proposal for ethics review.

A. Purpose:

The purpose of the examination is to evaluate the student's ability to defend, in writing and orally, the rationale, underlying theoretical concepts/constructs, methods, and implications of the dissertation proposal.

B. Timing:

The supervisor, dissertation committee, and student will together determine the date and time of the examination. The student will deliver the written proposal to the members of the Examination Committee, at least four weeks in advance of the date of the examination.

C. Examination Committee:

The Examination Committee will consist of a) the student's supervisor, b) the members of the dissertation committee (minimum of 2) and c) an Examiner chosen by the student's supervisor in consultation with the PhD Program Coordinator. The Examiner will be a member of the School of Graduate Studies who has not been involved with the thesis. The Chair of the Examination Committee will be appointed by the Registrar. The student will be informed of the outcome (Pass/Fail) at the end of the examination. The Examination Report (see attached) must be completed at the end of the examination and delivered by the supervisor to the Registrar within two days of the completed examination.

D. Examination format:

The examination will last a maximum of 2 hours. With the student excused from the room, the Chair will determine that a quorum – defined as the supervisor, 2 committee members, and the Examiner – is present and that everyone has read the proposal and is prepared to question the student. The Chair will review the procedures to be followed and will clarify the order in which the members will question the student. Normally the Examiner is the first questioner and the supervisor is the last. The student is then invited into the room to give a 15-minute oral presentation of the proposal. Following the presentation, the Examiner and committee members ask questions to explore the student's knowledge of the literature, theoretical and conceptual issues, and methods required to support the proposed research. When there are no further questions, the student is again excused from the room. After the committee has discussed the examination and reached a decision, the student will be invited back into the room and informed of the decision.

E. Evaluation:

A successful dissertation proposal examination will include a clear articulation of knowledge and synthesis of the field in relation to the following:

- a) Importance of the issue to be studied;
- b) Synthesis and appropriateness of the literature review;
- c) Logical relationships among the literature review, theoretical concepts/constructs, research questions and methods;
- d) Rigour of the chosen methods;
- e) Significance and originality of the knowledge to be generated.

Members must vote yes or no on the question whether or not the proposal and its defense are acceptable. More than one negative vote (or abstention) constitutes a failure of the proposal examination.

If the student fails the examination, s/he may retake the exam once, provided the student has not reached the time limit for achieving candidacy. If the second proposal examination is also graded as a Fail, the Faculty will recommend to the SGS that the student's registration in the program be cancelled. Students may appeal a failed first examination, using the steps outlined in the *Academic Appeals Policy* in the SGS Calendar, beginning with an appeal to the *Graduate Academic Appeals Committee*. As noted in the SGS Calendar, the appeal of a failed second examination goes directly to the *Graduate Academic Appeals Board* of SGS.