PHD Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Proposal

The PhD Comprehensive Examination involves an in-depth review of two cognate topics and the dissertation grant proposal. Its purpose is to determine whether the student has sufficient mastery of the areas to continue in the graduate program. The first stage will be the cognate topics and the second stage will be the dissertation grant proposal.

STAGE 1: Cognate Topics shall be chosen so as to contribute to the student’s overall knowledge of their area of specialization, without being directly related to the dissertation proposal. Two cognate topics are determined by and must be approved by the doctoral dissertation supervisor and two graduate faculty members (at least one must be appointed to KAHS) who are familiar with the topic areas (normally Supervisory Committee members). Candidates must be provided with a minimal reading list (range 5 – 10 articles) from the members. The cognate topic papers are intended to be an outline for examining the candidate rather than a comprehensive review. The expectation is that the papers take no more than three months to complete.

Cognate Topic Papers are intended primarily for examining the candidate. Each paper shall be submitted by the student (e.g. one on each cognate topic area) to each member of the examination committee at least 15 working days prior to the Cognate Topics Examination. Each paper shall be no less than 10 double-spaced pages (excluding references).

The Cognate Topics Examination will normally occur within the first 4 terms of registration in the PhD program. Students who do not meet this deadline will be put on academic probation for term 5 of registration in the PhD program. Failure to meet this requirement after term 5 will result in withdrawal from the program for failure to meet academic standards.

NOTE: The Cognate Topics Examination Form must be completed and submitted by the student to graduate program office no less than 15 working days prior to the examination. The supervisor and names of the faculty members who have selected the topics must each sign the form before submission. The exam date, time and name of the outside member must also be provided. The graduate program office will reserve the examination room along with audio/visual equipment and send a confirmation to the student and exam members via email.

The Cognate Topics Examination Committee will consist of the members who selected the topics plus one KAHS member at arm’s length.

Responsibilities of the Cognate Topics Examination Committee

Doctoral dissertation supervisor and selected faculty members who are familiar with topic areas:

- Approve cognate topics in consultation with the student;
- Provide adequate literature/reading lists and consultation;
- Read the written work submitted by the student prior to the examination;
- Take part in the questioning of the student at the examination;
- Vote on the outcome.
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KAHS (arm's length) member

- Acts as Chair for the examination to ensure that the examination is conducted according to the regulations and that all signatures are obtained;
- Reads the written work submitted by the student prior to the examination and take part in the questioning of the student at the examination;
- Conducts the vote on the outcome (Chair is a voting member), including eliciting a consensus on written comments about the examination;
- Records the examination result and returns the completed examination form to the graduate program office.

NOTE: If any member is not in attendance, the examination shall be postponed and rescheduled.

Format of Examination

The duration of the examination shall be no more than two hours, and it shall follow standard oral examination procedure. The examination of the first cognate topic will commence with a 15 minute presentation by the student, followed by one round of questioning by the examination committee. The examination of the second cognate topic follows, which will also commence with a 15 minute presentation by the student, followed by one round of questioning by the examination committee.

Evaluation

Each element of the examination is evaluated independently, with the results recorded on the examination form provided by the graduate program office. Evaluation options are as follows:

1. Pass
2. Pass with revisions
3. Re-examine with revisions
4. Fail

Revision of a cognate topic paper(s) is necessary if members of the examining committee decide there is substantive weakness in either the paper or the question period that warrants the revision of the document.

Re-examination of one or both cognate topic papers is required if there is gross error or omission in the paper or if the student does not display sufficient knowledge of the material. This normally involves submission of a revised written paper(s) to the examination committee prior to re-examination.

All members of the examining committee must sign the examination form.

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In the case of "Pass with revisions"

- Required revisions must be specified in writing to the student and a copy of these specifications shall be provided to the graduate program office.
- The due date for submission of revised materials must be set and written on the examination form at the time of the examination. The date must be within 6 weeks of the examination date.
- The doctoral dissertation supervisor and two additional KAHS members (not arm’s length KAHS member) must be presented with the revised cognate paper(s) for their approval before the set due date.
- The doctoral dissertation supervisor must notify the graduate program office in writing or by email when the revisions are completed to the satisfaction of the doctoral dissertation supervisor and two KAHS members (not arm’s length member).

In the case of "Re-examine with revisions"

- The student will automatically be put on academic probation for failure to maintain academic standards.
- Required revisions must be specified in writing to the student and a copy of these specifications shall be provided to the graduate program office.
- The Re-examination shall occur within 6 weeks of the initial examination.
- The examination committee membership shall remain the same as for the initial examination.
- The student will present the examination committee with revised written paper(s) in the relevant area(s) a minimum of 10 working days prior to the re-examination date.
- The student will undergo a second oral examination, following the same procedures.
- The student’s performance in each area is evaluated as ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ and recorded on the Re-examination form provided by the graduate program office.
- All examining committee members must sign the form, and submit the signed form to the graduate program office after the Re-examination.

In the case of "Fail"

- In the event of a ‘fail’ vote in any area after the re-examination, the student will be immediately withdrawn from the PhD program for failure to maintain academic standards. The student cannot be converted to a master’s degree.
The Cognate Topics Examination Form must be completed and submitted by the student to graduate program office no less than 15 working days prior to the examination. The names of the faculty members who have selected the topics must be provided, along with exam date and time. The graduate program office will reserve the examination room along with audio/visual equipment and send a confirmation to the student and exam members via email.

**STUDENT NAME ___________________________  STUDENT # ___________________________**

The doctoral supervisor and two graduate faculty members (at least one must be appointed to KAHS) who are familiar with the topic areas (normally Supervisory Committee) have selected the two cognate topics for the student listed above.

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**Topic Titles**

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**EXAMINATION RESULTS**

1) Pass 2) Pass with revisions 3) Re-examine with revisions 4) Fail

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<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
<th>REVISION COMMENTS</th>
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Pass with revisions (The due date for submission of revised materials must be set within 6 weeks of this examination date.)

**DUE DATE: ___________________________**

Re-examine with revisions (The re-examination shall occur within 6 weeks of this examination.)

**DUE DATE: ___________________________**

**EXAMINING COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

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STAGE 2: Dissertation Grant Proposal is to enable the student to clarify the rationale and strategy for approaching the subject, and to permit members of the doctoral dissertation supervisory committee to provide advice to the student. The student may work in consultation with the supervisor in preparing the proposal. The proposal is written in the format of a grant application.

Examination of the dissertation grant proposal will normally be completed within 6 terms of registration in the PhD program. Students who do not meet this deadline will be put on academic probation for term 7 of registration in the PhD program. If the examination has not taken place by end of term 7, the student will continue on academic probation for term 8 of registration in the PhD program. Failure to meet the requirement by the end of term 8 will result in withdrawal from the graduate program for failure to meet academic standards.

NOTE: The Dissertation Grant Examination Form must be completed and submitted by the student to graduate program office no less than 15 working days prior to the examination. The Supervisory Committee Approval section must be signed by each member before submission. The exam date, time and name of the outside member must also be provided. The graduate program office will reserve the examination room along with audio/visual equipment and send a confirmation to the student and exam members via email.

The written Proposal should include:

- an introduction;
- a brief literature review; and
- a methods section.

The introduction should provide a rationale for the study and a concise statement of the problem and specific purpose(s). The review of literature should include those references that illustrate where the study fits in relation to the existing body of knowledge in the topic. The methodology should contain a description of the procedures to be conducted and the experimental design.

Content and Length: Presentation of the proposal content can be tailored to the granting agency that is appropriate for the person's area (e.g., CIHR is more project based while NSERC is more program based). The proposal should be 15-20 pages (double-space) regardless of the grant style.

Budget: The budget (including the budget justification) and CV portions of the dissertation grant proposal are expected to be completed. These components are not included in the page limits of the dissertation grant proposal. The aim of this exercise is to give the student experience with writing all aspects of a dissertation grant proposal.

The Dissertation Grant Proposal shall be submitted by the student to each member of the examination committee at least 15 working days prior to the examination.

The Dissertation Grant Proposal Examination Committee should consist of the Dissertation Supervisory Committee members plus one "outside" graduate faculty member (arm's length and outside the KAHS graduate program, or minimally related to the thesis area).

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Responsibilities of the Examination Committee

Doctoral Dissertation Supervisory Committee (three members):

- Approve the dissertation grant proposal
- Read the proposal submitted by the student prior to the examination;
- Take part in the questioning of the student at the examination;
- Vote on the outcome.

KAHS (arm’s length) member

- Acts as the Chair’s for the examination to ensure that the examination is conducted according to the regulations and that all signatures are obtained;
- Reads the dissertation grant proposal submitted by the student prior to the examination;
- Takes part in the questioning of the student at the examination;
- Conducts the vote on the outcome (the Chair is a voting member), including eliciting a consensus on written comments about the examination;
- Records the examination result and returns the completed examination form to the graduate program office.

Format of Examination

The duration of the examination shall be no more than two hours, and it shall follow standard dissertation defense procedure. It shall commence with a 15-20 minute dissertation grant proposal presentation by the student, followed by at least two rounds of questioning by the examination committee. Questions focus on the research proposal.

Evaluation

The result is recorded on the examination form. Evaluation options are as follows:

1. Pass
2. Pass with revisions
3. Re-examine with revisions
4. Fail

 Portions of the dissertation proposal grant will no doubt be used subsequently in various sections of the dissertation and, thus, constructive criticism from members of the examination committee is encouraged.

Revision of the dissertation grant proposal is necessary if members of the examination committee decide that substantive changes to any component of the proposal are required.

Re-examination of the dissertation grant proposal is necessary if the student does not display sufficient knowledge of the study rationale and relevant literature, experimental design, or

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methodology, or analytical tools to be employed. This normally involves submission of a revised
written proposal to the examination committee prior to re-examination.

All members of the examination committee must sign the Examination Form. The Chair shall
submit the signed form to the graduate program office after the examination.

In the case of “Pass with revisions”

• Required revisions must be specified in writing to the student and a copy of these
  specifications shall be provided to the graduate program office.
• The due date for submission of revised materials must be set and written on the
  examination form at the time of the examination. The due date must be within 6
  weeks of the examination date.
• All members of the doctoral dissertation supervisory committee must be presented
  with the revised dissertation grant proposal for their approval before the set due date.
  At the discretion of the committee, approval of the final revisions may be turned over
  to the Chair and Supervisor (i.e. minor revisions).
• The doctoral dissertation supervisor must notify the graduate program office in
  writing or by email when the revisions are completed to the satisfaction of all
  members of the doctoral dissertation supervisory committee.

In the case of “Re-examine with revisions”

• The student will automatically be put on academic probation for failure to meet
  academic standards.
• Required revisions must be specified in writing for the student and a copy of these
  specifications shall be provided to the graduate program office.
• The re-examination shall normally occur within 6 weeks of the initial examination.
• The re-examination committee membership shall remain the same as for the initial
  examination.
• The student will present the re-examination committee with revised proposal a
  minimum of 10 working days prior to the re-examination date.
• The student will undergo a second oral examination, following the same procedures.
• The student’s performance is evaluated as ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ and recorded on the Re-
  examination form provided by the graduate program office.
• All examination committee members must sign the form, and submit the signed form
  to the graduate program office after the re-examination.

In the case of “Fail”

• In the event of a ‘fail’ vote in any area after the re-examination, the student will be
  immediately withdrawn from the PhD program for failure to maintain academic
  standards. The student cannot be converted to a master’s degree.
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Submission of Approved Dissertation Proposal

Following successful completion of the dissertation grant proposal examination or upon completion of revisions or re-examination, the student is responsible to submit the following documents to the Graduate Program Office within 10 days of the examination date.

Form TD1: Thesis/Dissertation Research Submission;
One copy of the dissertation proposal;
One copy of all appropriate ethics forms.
The Dissertation Grant Examination Form must be completed and submitted by the student to graduate program office no less than 15 working days prior to the examination. The Supervisory Committee Approval section must be signed by each member before submission. The exam date, time and name of the outside member must also be provided. The graduate program office will reserve the examination room along with audio/visual equipment and send a confirmation to the student and exam members via email.

**SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE APPROVAL**
The Supervisory Committee has read the above student’s dissertation proposal and agrees that the version read is ready to proceed to oral examination. E-mail confirmation can be attached, in lieu of physical signatures.

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**EXAMINATION RESULTS**

1) Pass  2) Pass with revisions  3) Re-examine with revisions  4) Fail

**COMMENTS**

Pass with revisions: All members of the doctoral dissertation supervisory committee must be presented with the revised proposal for their approval before the set deadline date below (within 6 weeks of deadline date).

**REVISED PROPOSAL DUE DATE:**

Re-examine with revisions: The Re-Examination shall normally occur within 6 weeks of the initial examination. The examination committee membership shall remain the same as for the initial examination.**EXAMINATION DUE DATE:**

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