

# Policies and Procedures for Oral Comprehensive Examination for Doctoral Candidacy

## Overview

- The student will be responsible for going online and filling out the Results of Oral Comprehensive Exam form at <http://grad.arizona.edu/forms> and obtaining the appropriate pre-exam signatures. They will then take the form to the exam where the committee will record the results and provide their signatures. A representative of the committee will bring the form to Admin 316 within 24 business hours from when the exam has been completed.
- There was been no change in policy with regard to committee members (see the requirements at Comprehensive Examination Committee at <http://grad.arizona.edu/academics/program-requirements/doctor-of-philosophy/comprehensive-examination> ). We must still approve special members and accept petitions for exceptions to committee requirements before the exam has taken place. We will review the membership after we have received the "Results of Oral Comprehensive Exam form at <http://grad.arizona.edu/forms> . It is essential, therefore, that departments attend to the eligibility requirements before appointing committees.
- Emergency Line – (520) 621-5128. The Graduate College Degree Certification Office maintains a telephone line for the Committee serving on Oral Comprehensive Examinations. The number for this line is (520) 621-5128. Please fee free to use this number for questions concerning examinations or for emergencies which arise before for during examinations.
- A map to the Administration Building can be found at <http://iiewww.ccit.arizona.edu/uamap/staticLarge/66.html>

# **Policies and Procedures for Oral Comprehensive Examination for Doctoral Candidacy**

## **Nature of the Examination**

Before admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree, the student must pass written and oral Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations. This examination is intended to test the student's comprehensive knowledge of the major and minor subjects of study, both in breadth across the general field of study, and in depth within the area of specialization.

## **One Exam with Written and Oral Parts**

The Comprehensive Examination is considered a single examination, although it consists of written and oral parts.

## **The Written Part**

While the Graduate College sets general policies and guidelines for the exams, it is expected that each program will have different ways of assessing a student's knowledge of the field and their preparation to begin the dissertation.

Each program determines the format and administration of the written portion. A student will ordinarily pass the written portion before sitting for the oral portion.

## **The Oral Part**

The time between the written and oral portion is determined by individual programs, but the oral portion should come early enough to allow the student to advance to candidacy in a timely fashion.

Upon successful completion of the written examinations in the major and minor(s), the Oral Comprehensive Examination is conducted before the examining committee of the faculty. This is the occasion when faculty committee members have both the opportunity and obligation to require the student to display a broad knowledge of the chosen field of study and sufficient depth of understanding in areas of specialization. Discussion of proposed dissertation research may be included. The examining committee must attest that the student has demonstrated the professional level of knowledge expected of a junior academic colleague.

## **Second Attempts**

Programs will have written policies regarding second attempts.

## **The Dissertation Defense**

The written and oral portions of the comprehensive examination must take place at least three months prior to the Final Oral Examination (dissertation defense).

## **The Examination Committee**

The examining committee must consist of a minimum of four members. The Major Advisor and two additional members must be tenured, or tenure track. The fourth member may be tenured or tenure-track, or a special approved member. Special members

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must be pre-approved by the Dean of the Graduate College. Any members beyond the fourth can also be tenured or tenure-track, or special approved members. The oral examination committee need not be the same as the dissertation committee.

### **Conduct of the Examination**

All members must be in attendance for the entire exam which should be at least one hour in length, but not exceed three hours. Individual programs may specify a minimum time for the oral exam that is greater than one hour. The examination is conducted in closed session. It is not open to the public.

### **Absence of Committee Members**

If a full committee is not assembled, the examination must be cancelled or postponed.

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## Prior to the Examination

Before beginning, and in the absence of the student, it is necessary to review the ground rules for the examination and establish procedures to be followed.

The '*Procedures for Oral Comprehensive Examinations for Doctoral Candidacy*' should be distributed at this time. This document summarizes governing policies and procedures.

The chair for the examination is identified and the general structure and conduct of the examination is discussed.

## Evaluation of Performance

At the conclusion of the Oral Comprehensive Examination (and after the student has left the room), discussion of the student's performance is initiated. Each member of the examination committee is expected to evaluate the student's performance on the basis of the examination as a whole, not just on a particular area of questioning or only on his/her own field of specialization.

A committee member reviews aloud the voting policies and procedures prior to the voting. Straw votes are encouraged. However, only one final, official, and secret vote by ballot is permitted.

More than one negative or abstaining vote will result in failure of the exam.

Programs will have written policies regarding whether or not students may retake failed oral exams as well as specific policies regarding second attempts.

***In any case, the Graduate College allows no more than one re-take of the oral exam.***

Special care to ensure the secrecy of the voting process must be taken in those rare instances when a committee member cannot be present and the examination is conducted by telephone call.

Ensure the audibility, attribution of questions, and responses during both the questioning period and the subsequent discussion prior to voting. A committee member, acting as proxy, signs for the absent member in an examination involving a conference call.

Ballots are tallied by a committee member, who informs the committee whether the vote was *Pass* or *Fail*.

Other than the Pass/Fail decision, the numbers of Pass versus Fail votes and the identities of persons voting one way or the other are kept in strict confidence. An examiner who disagrees with the committee's decision may note the objection beside his/her signature on the report if desired.

A student *passes* or *fails* the Oral Comprehensive examination. Two negative votes are necessary and sufficient for failure. An abstaining vote counts as a negative vote.

If the student fails, the Committee has two options which need to be noted on the results of the Oral Comprehensive Examination form.

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1. Repeat the Oral Comprehensive Examination.
2. The Committee votes not to recommend a repeat examination.

### **Re-examination Committee**

No further course work is required from students before a reexamination.

If a reexamination is recommended, the committee members must be the same as those present at the first examination.

### **Finalizing and Recording the Exam**

Regardless of the outcome of the Oral Comprehensive Examination, a committee member must return the *'Results of the Oral Comprehensive Examination for Advancement to Candidacy'* to the Graduate Degree Certification Office,

Administration Building, Room 316, within 24 business hours of the examination.

If the student failed the exam, the ballots should also be returned with the "Results..." form.

# BALLOT

FOR ORAL COMPREHENSIVE  
EXAMINATIONS FOR  
DOCTORAL CANDIDACY

The University of Arizona  
**Graduate College**  
Graduate Degree Certification

Procedures            Minimum time for the Oral Comprehensive Examination is 1 hour and maximum time is 3 hours

All examiners must be present for the entire Oral Comprehensive Examination

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Evaluation of Performance            Full discussion of student's performance is important before casting ballots.

Voting                                    There is only one official vote, by secret ballot. Straw ballots may be taken and are encouraged when consensus regarding performance is questionable.

All committee members must vote pass or fail.

Two negative votes are necessary and sufficient for failure. An Abstaining vote counts as a negative vote.

A committee member tallies the votes and informs the committee and the student of a pass or fail vote. *Vote numbers are not revealed.*

Reexamination Recommendation            In the event of a first failure, the examining committee must indicate their recommendation regarding a reexamination on the '*Results of the Oral Comprehensive Examination*' form. A second failure is not eligible for reexamination.

Circle one only:            Pass                                    Fail                                    Abstain

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