



Reproductive and Developmental Sciences Graduate Program

Comprehensive Examination (PhD Program) Examination Policies and Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's knowledge of their chosen field of study, the general area of reproductive and/or developmental sciences, and the student's ability to communicate his/her understanding of it in English.

Timing

The comprehensive exam should be scheduled at as early a date as may be feasible in each case, and in all cases, no later than the end of the second year of residency in the PhD program.

The comprehensive examination is one of the requirements for advancement to candidacy in the PhD program. It is required that all doctoral students be admitted to candidacy within 36 months from the date of initial registration. The program deadline for comprehensive examination is designed to allow students to safely advance to candidacy without difficulty.

Format

The comprehensive examination is an oral examination.

The examining committee is appointed by the Program Director, after consulting with the Chair of the student's supervisory committee. The examining committee is composed of a Chair and four examiners: two members of the supervisory committee, and two additional members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies with expertise in the student's area of research. The student's supervisor may attend the examination, but does not ask questions. The attendance of the supervisor should be discussed by the student's supervisory committee, when the examination date and committee composition are discussed.

The student is required to meet with the members of the examining committee at least three months prior to the examination to determine the topics and scope of examination. It is expected that the topics of the examination will be focused primarily on the student's specific research area.

The comprehensive examination typically lasts 2 hours. The student has the option of giving a 20-30 minute oral presentation on their research project at the beginning of the examination. This may be useful to those examination committee members who are not members of the supervisory committee. If this option is chosen, the student should inform all members of the examination committee in advance of the examination date.

Each of the four examiners takes turns asking questions (about 20-30 minutes each). The examination committee Chair will normally not ask any questions, but should ensure that all the examiners' questions are presented in a clear and fair manner.



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Results

At the end of the question period, the candidate is asked to leave the room. If the supervisor is present, s/he can remain the room. The Chair asks the examiners to cast their vote (pass/fail) concerning the student's performance in their own portions of the exam. The final result is based on a majority vote. In case of a tie, the Chair will cast the deciding vote.

The Chair communicates the results of the examination to the student, and a final report is submitted to the Program Director.

If the student fails in the initial attempt, s/he will be allowed to take a subsequent oral or written examination. This should be completed within the following 3 months. The examination may be repeated once in the event of initial failure, but if the student fails a second time, further registration in the Faculty of Graduate Studies will be denied.

Resources

[Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Comprehensive Examination Guidelines](#)

