

PROCEDURES FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Purpose

Faculty in each area of specialization may require their students to write comprehensive exams as a program requirement (see Section 8.7 Doctoral Degrees, in the University Calendar, copied to Appendix). A comprehensive exam is not a requirement of the University of Alberta – only the candidacy exam is (see Section 8.3 Conduct of Examinations, Doctoral Candidacy Examinations, in the University Calendar, copied to Appendix). This document outlines the procedures to be used by all specializations requiring comprehensive exams in the Alberta School of Business PhD Program.

Delegated Responsibility

The primary responsibility for written comprehensive exams rests with each academic department within the school. This includes: establishing the academic content to be examined, writing the exam questions, administering the exam, and grading the exams.

The Department Chair will appoint an Examining Committee that will be responsible for writing and grading the exam. Members of the committee will be chosen from faculty who are supervising and teaching PhD students and will include the representative of the area of specialization on the PhD Policy Committee as *ex officio* chair.

Eligibility

A student is eligible to write a comprehensive exam for a specialization or cognate discipline when all course requirements for the specialization or cognate discipline have been completed.

Examination Dates

Because comprehensive examinations must be passed within two years, students should take – and faculty should grade – the exam by the end of the student's 22nd month in the program (e.g., June 30 for a student who began doctoral program course work on September 1 two years earlier.) Exceptions to this deadline must be approved by the area representative for the student's specialization and the Associate Dean of the PhD program. All students eligible to take the exam shall take the exam on the same day(s). The faculty shall consult with students in setting the exam date(s) and ideally arrive at a mutually agreeable date, but the onus is on the student to be available for the exam. Students should be provided one month's notice unless a shorter period of time is mutually agreed to by all students writing the exam and the faculty involved.

Examination Administration

The department will schedule a room or rooms and administer the exam according to the rules it establishes regarding exam length and exam components. Options include: open book, closed book, take home, paper-based, etc. Faculty members responsible for writing the exam

should be available for questions while students are taking the exam. The completed exams will be distributed to the Examining Committee for grading.

Grading

Each Examining Committee can determine who is grading what part of the exam. Under normal circumstances, all grading will be completed and students informed of the results within one week of writing the exam.

Students will receive a grade of Pass, Fail, or Conditional Pass. Examiners will take into consideration whether or not the student is writing the examination as a specialization or cognate discipline in the area. The area representative of the specialization is responsible for communicating the results to the student and the PhD Office on behalf of the Examining Committee.

The Examining Committee may provide brief written comments to those students who pass the exam, with a copy to the PhD Office.

A grade of Conditional Pass indicates that the student is *close to passing* but requires *some further, limited, work*. If a grade of Conditional Pass is given, the Examining Committee will specify, in writing, to the student and the Business PhD Office, the exact nature of the further work to be done, and the time by which it has to be completed. Normally, the work must be completed within 1 month after the student received their results.

The Examining Committee will provide brief written comments for those students who fail the exam, with a copy to the PhD Office.

Re-examination

Students must pass the exam within a maximum of two attempts. Students who do not pass in two attempts are required to withdraw from the program. Unless an extension is approved by the student's supervisor and the Associate Dean of the PhD program, the second attempt must be made within 2 months of the original exam (e.g., August 31 for a student who took the exam in June.) The aforementioned procedures generally apply for the second attempt.

Transition Rule

Students entering before this policy was approved can choose either this policy or the policy in place when they entered.

Appendix: Excerpts from Graduate Program Manual

8.3 Conduct of Examinations, Doctoral Candidacy Examination

Establishing Candidacy Examination Procedures:

Each department offering a doctoral degree is responsible for establishing detailed examination policies and procedures for the candidacy examination. These documents should be publicly available.

The candidacy examination is an oral examination; some departments may also require that students take comprehensive written examinations prior to the candidacy examination, but such examinations do not form part of the candidacy examination itself.

The candidacy examination must be held within three years of the commencement of the program in accordance with the Doctoral Degrees section of the University Calendar.

8.7 Doctoral Degrees

Program Requirements:

A doctoral degree is awarded upon successful completion of a doctoral degree program. All departments are responsible for developing and publishing a clear statement of all program requirements to be completed by the student in addition to the thesis. These requirements will vary from department to department, but will likely include a number of required and optional course requirements, the academic integrity and ethics requirement, a candidacy examination requirement, and in some disciplines, written comprehensive examinations.

All program requirements, other than the thesis, must be completed within three years of the commencement of a student's program.

History of Policy

Prior Procedures became effective September 1, 2007

Approved by PhD Policy Committee on December 4, 2014

Updated by PhD Policy Committee on April 4, 2018