



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY
Department of Cell Biology

Graduate Program Manual

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Section 1 - The Purpose of the Graduate Student Manual

The Graduate Student Manual is meant to assist students in understanding the policies of the Department of Cell Biology program with regard to our graduate program. This includes academic requirements, thesis preparation and examinations. Some information may be included here that overlaps with what is specified in the University of Alberta Calendar, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Graduate Manual or other University of Alberta policies and procedures (UAAPOL). In the case of disparity, the University Calendar, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Graduate Manual and/or UAAPOL will take precedent.

The policies regarding examination proceedings set out in the version of the Cell Biology Graduate Student Manual that was in effect when a student: 1) entered the MSc program or 2) transferred to the PhD program (or entered the PhD program directly) are the policies that apply to them. Unless otherwise specified explicitly, changes to policies regarding examination proceedings in subsequent versions of the Graduate Student Manual apply only to new students or those students newly transferring to the PhD program.

The Graduate Student Manual will be revised and updated yearly, with new versions coming into force on September 1. Exceptional circumstances may necessitate off-cycle revisions. In these cases, changes will be communicated to affected students directly.

In addition to the policies listed here, students in Cell Biology are governed by University of Alberta policies including the most recent version of those listed below:

- [University of Alberta Calendar](#)
- [University of Alberta - Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research \(FGSR\) Graduate Manual](#)
- [University of Alberta - Code of Student Behaviour](#)
- [University of Alberta - Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy](#)

*Responsibility for achieving a work, study, and living environment free of harassment and discrimination rests with every individual to whom this Policy applies. All members can reasonably expect to pursue their work and studies in a safe and respectful environment. Neither the University nor any associated individual shall practice or condone any discriminatory or harassing conduct that adversely affects the pursuit of work and study or life on campus. Individuals who are aware of acts of discrimination or harassment are encouraged to take appropriate steps to stop the discriminatory or harassing behavior. **Advice and assistance may be sought from anyone in a position of authority, such as a supervisor, instructor or administrator.** More formal advice and assistance may be sought from the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights (OSDHR), Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO), the Association of Academic Staff University of Alberta (AASUA), the Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA), Human Resource Services (HRS) and Organizational Health and Effectiveness (OHE), the Office of the Dean of Students and Student Accessibility Services (SAS).*

Section 2 - Expectations and Responsibilities

Students are Expected to Remain in “Good Standing”

To remain in good standing students must meet program requirements on schedule including:

- Complete ethics training requirements by the end of year one.
- Attend at least one supervisory committee meeting per calendar year.
- Achieve satisfactory performance at their committee meetings and coursework.
- Provide an Annual Report by January 15th each year.
- Attend a yearly meeting with the Graduate Coordinator.
- Students in the PhD program must pass the Candidacy exam by the deadline set by FGSR.

Students must be in good standing to be eligible for departmental contributions to their stipend.

[Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy, UAPPOL](#)

Excellence in research and scholarship depends on the creativity, hard work and dedication of its practitioners. It also depends on integrity. Dishonesty and fabrication fundamentally undermine the worth and usefulness of research and other scholarly work. Even when untainted by fraud, scholarly work must meet other standards of ethics and integrity. Discoveries obtained through deceit, that disregard proper attribution of source material or the contributions of others, or that involve the violation or disregard of others' rights, are antithetical to basic professional and scholarly values. Breaches of integrity also offend society. Society places a trust in university scholars and researchers not only to pursue knowledge, but to do so in a manner that respects and promotes fundamental values of honesty, fairness, beneficence and freedom from exploitation.

The Primary Responsibility for Graduate Students in Cell Biology is Performing Original Research Supporting a Thesis

The majority of a graduate student's responsibilities will be in the form of original scientific research on a topic of their choosing within the general field of Cell Biology. This original research will compose their thesis that they will defend in an oral examination to graduate with a MSc or PhD degree.

- The quantity of original research expected for a student graduating with a PhD degree from Cell Biology corresponds to the amount of data that would comprise at least two first author primary research papers in Cell Biology journals appropriate for their field. It is expected for PhD students that a research contribution corresponding to one or more primary research papers with the student as primary author will be accepted for publication in an appropriate academic journal prior to the PhD Thesis Examination.
- For students graduating with a MSc degree, the expected amount of original research corresponds to 2 complete figures, publishable in a Cell Biology journal in their field.

It is the position of the Department of Cell Biology that original laboratory research performed by students in the Cell Biology program is academic in nature, serving to help them complete their thesis. Thus, it is not considered “work” in the sense of traditional employment. The hours students will need to devote to ensuring the success of their thesis research will vary depending on the nature and current state of their project. Successful progress toward their thesis can and will likely include reasonable expectations of students performing laboratory research during evenings and/or weekends as necessary to ensure the success of their individual projects.

Students are Expected to Attend All Departmental Seminars

As part of their training, it is expected that Cell Biology graduate students attend all departmental seminars. If a student is unable to attend, the supervisor should be informed of the reasons for the absence. The Graduate Coordinator may take attendance of graduate students at departmental seminars and multiple unexcused absences will be noted the student will then be considered 'not in good standing', in terms of their graduate program until such time as they meet with the graduate coordinator and/or establish a pattern of attending seminars.

Ethics Training

All graduate students are required to take at least eight hours of ethics training.

There are two required components which total 6 hours:

- **EPR** (Introduction to Ethics and Personal Responsibility in the Lab) for 1 hour:
Offered through the Department of Biochemistry each September
- **ESI (Ethics and Scientific Integrity Day)** for 5 hours:
Offered by the Faculty of Medicine, online registration is limited. There are 3 components.

A minimum of two additional hours from these three options must be completed:

- **GET (Graduate Ethics Training)** for 5 hours
- **Care and Use of Animals in Research, Teaching and Testing** for 1.5 hours
- **Animal Care Certification and Biohazard Approvals** for 1 hour
- **Human Research Ethics Training (on approval of Graduate Coordinator)**

Students are expected to complete ethics training within the first year of graduate studies. The GET program should be completed before attending ESI Day. Completion of each ethics training component must be confirmed with the Student Program Advisor.

Professional Development

Students have to fulfill the Professional Development requirement [as specified by FGSR](#). This includes submission of an IDP plan within 12 months of the start of the Master's program; within 18 months of direct entrance into the PhD program. Progress and fulfillment of the IDP is the students' responsibility but will be monitored in the Annual Report.

Teaching

There are currently no teaching assistantships available within the Department of Cell Biology. Graduate students may optionally participate in teaching outside Cell Biology, as long as these additional optional duties do not affect their thesis research progress or other aspects of their performance within Cell Biology. FGSR offers a [Graduate Teaching and Learning Program](#) that students can participate in to gain teaching experience including pedagogical knowledge, competencies in course design and delivery, and classroom management and leadership skills.

Stipends and Tuition Support

Full-time graduate students in good standing are eligible to receive a stipend supported by their supervisor to be no less than a minimum determined by the Graduate Program Committee. If funds are available, the Department of Cell Biology will provide additional financial support to all eligible students in good standing to help cover at least part of the cost of domestic tuition and fees [including the new Common Student Space, Sustainability and Services (CoSSS) fee]. Provided funds are available, these will be provided for up to 3 years for MSc students and up to 6 years for PhD students.

- It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that tuition and fees are paid directly to the University of Alberta ([Section 4 - Fees, FGSR Graduate Manual](#))
- Note that stipends provided by through Graduate Research Assistant Fellowship (GRAF) as per Articles 10-11 of the [Graduate Student Assistantship Collective Agreement](#) as well as many other stipends provided via scholarships are not considered 'employment'.
- We note that students have other commitments (e.g. part time employment) in addition to their academic studies. Students are expected to ensure these other commitments do not impact timely progress of their independent laboratory research that is a major portion of their degree program.

Courses and Registration

Current course requirements for MSc and PhD students in Cell Biology are outlined in the [university calendar](#). Students registered in thesis-based Master's and Doctoral programs must register each year. All students must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 credits (9*) each term. This is normally a combination of graded coursework and thesis research.

- Students who are registered in the Winter session and are working only on thesis research from May to August, are required to register for the Spring and Summer sessions, separately.

● Responsibility for Yearly Registration

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements for ongoing registration in their programs as specified in the Calendar. They also are responsible for ensuring that their programs are properly planned and in accordance with degree specifications, and for the completeness and accuracy of their registration. They are also responsible for adjustments in registration made necessary by changes to their academic status or immigration status.

- **Students must register themselves in the appropriate courses each academic year.**
- For assistance or Departmental approval required for this process, please contact the Student Program Advisor in MSB 5-16 well in advance of the deadline for registration.

Section 3 - Committees Supporting Graduate Students in Cell Biology

(This section applies to all graduate students)

- Note that MSc or PhD studies in Cell Biology are largely self-directed by the student, supported by policy / advisory committees.
- The Graduate Program Committee and Student/Faculty Advisory Sub-Committee provide general oversight as to Departmental policy and procedures.
- Primary mentoring of students is provided by the individual Student Supervisory Committees.

Graduate Program Committee

The Cell Biology graduate program is administered by the Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate Program Committee, consisting of the three faculty members appointed by the Department Chair. This committee reports to the Department Chair and works with the Graduate Coordinator to make decisions regarding admissions, nomination for scholarships, discipline and otherwise provide oversight for the graduate program. The Graduate Program Committee is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator. Note that student or supervisor requests for exceptions to Departmental policy as it applies to graduate students must be approved by this committee.

Student/Faculty Advisory Sub-Committee

This sub-committee is composed of both student and faculty representatives, and promotes student participation in developing policy for graduate education in Cell Biology. This sub-committee makes recommendations about the policies and procedures related to graduate student education to the Cell Biology Graduate Program Committee. The scope of this committee includes creating and revising written policies governing day-to-day activities (graduate manual) as well as evaluation (committee reports etc.). The committee is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator or their delegate. It includes two Cell Biology Graduate Student representatives identified by the Cell Biology Graduate Student Association. Student members will be representative of the diversity of the Cell Biology student body as well represent two different research laboratories. This committee includes an equal number of Cell Biology faculty members, one of which will normally be the Graduate Coordinator. The Student Program Advisor will also attend meetings of this sub-committee and act as the recording secretary.

Individual Student Supervisory Committees

This is the most important committee in terms of ongoing student mentoring. An appropriate supervisory committee will be assembled for each graduate student in the Cell Biology program and is responsible for guiding the day-to-day progress toward successful defense of a thesis based on original research. The supervisory committee will advise students on course selection, their thesis project and other issues related to successful completion of the graduate program. The committee will be comprised of three faculty members, one of whom must be the student's Supervisor. It is strongly recommended that one Committee member be from outside the Department of Cell Biology.

- **Note: The supervisor is responsible for the establishment of the supervisory committee and for scheduling annual (or more frequently as necessary) meetings with the student.**
- If a student feels their supervisor or supervisory committee is not fulfilling their duties, they should inform the Graduate Coordinator immediately.

Section 4 - Supervisory Committee Meetings (MSc and PhD)

(This section applies to all graduate students)

The supervisory committee is the primary source of mentorship for graduate students in addition to their supervisor. Students are strongly encouraged to view committee meetings as a valuable source of feedback regarding their thesis research. While at least one meeting per year is mandated, students can request additional meetings if they feel it would be beneficial to their progress.

Progress Reports

Students must provide a written progress report (format described below) a week in advance of all supervisory committee meetings.

- The report, excluding figures, references and attachments should be no more than 10 pages double spaced.
- This must be delivered by email (PDF format) to the Student Program Advisor and to all supervisory committee members by 4pm, 5 business days prior to the scheduled committee meeting date.
- Failure to submit the report on time may lead to a 'unsatisfactory' performance evaluation by the supervisory committee.
- Experimental data included in the progress reports should be in a 'publication quality' format.
- These reports will be added to the student's file.

Initial Supervisory Committee Meeting

The initial supervisory committee meeting must occur within the first 6 months of a student's program.

- For the initial meeting, the progress report will serve to introduce the committee to the proposed research. This should be prepared in consultation with the supervisor.
- It should include:
 - A review of previous research relevant to the proposed project.
 - Primary research papers, not reviews, should be cited.
 - A project rationale and hypothesis for the planned experiments must be outlined.
 - A detailed experimental plan for the next 12 months.
 - Proposed completion milestones for the planned experiments.
 - Students intending to graduate with a MSc degree should include a timeline for degree completion in the second year.
- If possible the first meeting should be scheduled immediately after your CELL 671 seminar. If this cannot be arranged, the student should also prepare a maximum 15 minute presentation highlighting their research plan, including the rationale and hypotheses to be tested as part of an original research program. Similarly, a summary of the experimental approaches to be employed should be included with discussion of how these will test the hypothesis. Note that the presentation should complement, not simply restate, the written report.

The initial committee meeting should involve a discussion between the student, supervisor and the committee on the scientific and experimental goals for the next year. Planned milestones should be noted in the meeting report, and used to gauge progress at subsequent meetings. Evaluation and feedback to the student should be recorded on the Committee Meeting Report (see below) by the supervisor.

Committee Meetings (Ongoing)

- The second committee meetings must happen within the first year of the student's program. This usually occurs 6-8 months after the first meeting.
- Following the initial supervisory committee meeting, progress reports should outline progress made and challenges faced in terms of their thesis research since the last meeting.
- It should include:
 - A summary (maximum 1 page) of the progress made by the student in the past year toward the previously proposed experimental plan and milestones outlined in the previous report.
 - The remaining pages should document details of the research completed since the last meeting, (including figures showing relevant findings)
 - Discussion of new experiments to expand on the initial findings and/or alternative strategies to be employed, including ongoing modifications of the hypotheses.
 - Challenges faced in achieving previously identified milestones and their plan to address these challenges or alternative strategies to progress their research.
 - Be delivered to the committee (5 business days) before the meeting.
- The student should also prepare a maximum 15 minute presentation highlighting the progress made and challenges faced with regard to their research since the last Committee meeting.

The committee will review this presentation/report with the student during the meeting and determine if satisfactory progress has been made, as well as advise the student as to future research goals and milestones. Future goals and milestones will be recorded by the supervisor on the Committee Meeting Report Form to inform future meetings.

Committee Meeting Report

At the close of the Supervisory Committee meeting, the supervisor will complete a *Committee Meeting Report* form which provides a summative assessment of the student's progress and outlines specific recommendations and milestones to be achieved for the subsequent committee meeting.

- The report will be signed by all members of the Supervisory Committee and by the student.
- Students will receive a copy of the Committee Meeting Report after every committee meeting.

The Final Supervisory Committee Meeting

A final committee meeting is scheduled at such a time when a student, supervisor and thesis committee agree that sufficient original research has been completed to prepare and defend a MSc or PhD thesis. The student will submit a detailed plan for their thesis. This plan should be prepared in consultation with their supervisor.

At this meeting the committee evaluates the student's plan for their thesis and if judged to be sufficient, sets a timeline leading up to the thesis defense exam. The minimum time to set up a thesis defense examination is 2 months (see below). The total time a student may remain in the MSc or PhD programs is set within the University Calendar and students should plan to prepare and submit their thesis well in advance of these deadlines.

A *Final Committee Meeting Report* must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

- If approval is not given by the committee for proceeding to a thesis and a defense, then the committee meeting report will outline what additional progress is necessary. Another committee meeting will then be required to judge if sufficient progress has been made.
- Students will receive a copy of the Committee Meeting Report after this committee meeting.

Section 5 - Preparing a MSc Thesis and the Final MSc Examination

Preparation of Master's Thesis

[FGSR sets the formatting guidelines for preparation of theses.](#)

- The chapter organization format for a Msc thesis in Cell Biology is:
 - **Introduction** - Encompassing all aspects of the submitted research
 - **Materials and Methods** - in a single chapter
 - **Results** - This may include multiple data chapters
 - **Discussion and Future Directions**- Encompassing all aspects of the submitted research
 - **References** - A single references section for all chapters
 - **Addenda** - Research or other material that does not stand alone as a chapter.
- Cell Biology does not accept a thesis format where the document is simply compiled from previously published manuscripts.
- Students are strongly encouraged to complete their thesis well in advance of the submission and defense deadlines to allow their supervisor or others to proofread the document.
- University of Alberta has several services to assist students with academic writing.
 - [Centre for Writers \(C4W\)](#)
 - [Academic Success Centre](#)

Student Responsibilities

- Present thesis plan and timeline as a pdf to committee and Student Program Advisor for acceptance a minimum of 2 months before examination.
- Prepare thesis in accordance with [FGSR](#) and [Department policy](#).
- Provide thesis to supervisor for review at least 7 weeks before the exam.
- Fill out Thesis Pre Approval form available from the Student Program Advisor, at least 4 weeks before exam.
- The completed thesis must be submitted to their committee members at least 3 weeks in advance of the defense. It may be in the form of a hard copy delivered to members of the Examining Committee, or electronically (PDF).
- Prepare seminar to present before final thesis defense.
- Submit completed thesis to FGSR within 6 months of completion of the final oral exam.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Identify potential examiners.
 - A MSc thesis examination committee must have at least 3 members, not including the supervisor. One of these must be from outside Cell Biology (arms length).
- Contact potential examiners to obtain confirmation of willingness to serve in that capacity.
- Inform the Student Program Advisor of exam day and time as well as the examining committee members at least 3 weeks before the exam.
- Book the room for the exam through the Student Program Advisor.
- In the case "Pass with revisions" confirm completion of revisions recommended by the Examining Committee.
- Complete Thesis Approval / Program Completion form (from Student Program Advisor).

Student Program Advisor / Examination Chair Responsibilities

- Provides/completes the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form.
- Complete report of examination including a letter outlining all revisions needed to be made by the student in the case of a 'pass subject to conditions'.

Overview of the Examination Process

- The Examining Committee shall conduct a final oral examination, based largely on the thesis.
- It is the responsibility of the supervisor to make arrangements for the candidate's examination in accordance with [FGSR regulations](#). **The candidate does not make these arrangements.**
- Prior to the exam, the candidate will make a public 50 minute presentation of their research.

MSc Examining Committee

For an MSc defense the Examining Committee consists of the Supervisory Committee plus an arm's length examiner. This must include at least three faculty members who are normally full-time and approved by the Graduate Coordinator. The arm's length examiner is not a member of the supervisory committee; not connected with the thesis research in a significant way; not associated with the student, outside of usual contact in courses or other non-thesis activities; and not a close collaborator of the supervisor. The arm's length examiner may be from the same department. As one member of the Examining Committee must be from outside the Department of Cell Biology, a member from another Department may be added to the Supervisory Committee to satisfy [FGSR rules](#). The exam will be chaired by a faculty member from Cell Biology who will not vote on the outcome of the examination.

Final Exam Deadlines

Please adhere to the following deadlines when scheduling a final examination:

More than 3 months before: The student presents a thesis plan and timeline to their Supervisory Committee and the Student Program Advisor as part of the Final Supervisory Committee Meeting.

More than 7 weeks before: The student presents a complete thesis draft to the Supervisor. The student should allow a minimum of 2 weeks for the supervisor to provide editorial comments prior to submission to the Examining Committee. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide timely comments on the draft thesis. If the supervisor does not provide feedback within two weeks, then the Graduate Coordinator should be notified immediately.

More than 5 weeks before: The student provides the committee with a draft copy of the thesis **that has been approved for distribution by the supervisor.** Each committee member will have 1 week to ensure the thesis meets minimum standard for preliminary acceptance. A Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form must be signed by all Supervisory Committee members, (form available from the Student Program Advisor). In signing the Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form the supervisor and committee members confirm that the thesis is of sufficient quality to proceed to a final examination. If a committee member does not feel the thesis is of minimal acceptable standard, than they will not sign the Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form until suitable revisions are made to make minimum standard.

4 weeks before: The Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form must be signed by all committee members and the supervisor. The supervisor informs the Student Program Advisor of the proposed time, place, and Examining Committee at least 3 weeks before the exam.

3 weeks before: The Student Program Advisor submits a [Notice of Approval of Oral Examining Committee](#) form to the FGSR.

- **The student distributes a completed thesis to members of the Examining Committee.**



1 week before: The Student Program Advisor provides the Chair of the Examining Committee written instructions as to how the exam should be conducted based on Program and FGSR regulations.

Examination

The final MSc oral exam in Cell Biology is comprised of three parts

1. The MSc thesis, which will document a sufficient body of Cell Biology original research.
2. An open departmental research seminar given by the candidate, of approximately one hour.
3. A closed MSc oral defense.

Note that during the question period following the seminar, Examination Committee Members cannot ask questions. Immediately following the seminar, the Examining Committee and the candidate shall proceed to the oral component of the final exam which will be held in a closed session and conducted in accordance with Program and FGSR regulations.

- All examiners must attend the entire examination in person (no teleconferencing).

Outcomes of the MSc Thesis Examination

At the close of the oral examination, the student will then be asked to withdraw from the examination room and Committee Members will be asked to comment on: (1) the acceptability of the thesis, and (2) the acceptability of the defense. Following a discussion, by majority vote the Examining Committee will recommend one of the following outcomes:

- **Pass** - The thesis has only minor errors of a typographical nature and the oral defense (including the public seminar) is satisfactory. A thesis must be submitted to the FGSR office within 6 months of the date of the Final Oral Examination.
- **Pass subject to revisions** - Thesis requires significant revisions, but these do not require additional experiments or major revisions to the content or structure of the thesis. The candidate must make the appropriate revisions before the supervisor signs the approval form. It is possible that additional committee members may also similarly reserve signing until revisions are made. A thesis must be submitted to the FGSR office within 6 months of the approval form being signed.
- **Adjourned** - The oral defense, including the public presentation was unsatisfactory or the thesis requires substantial revisions or additional experiments. The Committee will specify in writing a detailed description of the revisions / additional work required, and decide upon a date and time to reconvene and continue the examination. This must be no later than 6 months from the initial date of the examination.
- **Fail** - Thesis rejected.
 - This outcome can be appealed.

Report of Examination

The official minutes of the exam including both specific and summative evaluation of student performance on the exam will be provided as a "Report of Examination" completed by the Chair and signed by the examiners, student and the Chair at the close or adjournment of the exam.

- The committee and the student should not leave the examination room until the report is completed and signed.
- A copy of the completed and signed report should be provided to the student within five working days of the completion of the exam.
- In the case of an 'adjournment' a letter indicating the reasons for the adjournment and a timeline to reconvene the examination.

Submission of Approved Thesis to FGSR

It is the responsibility of the student to complete revisions of the thesis as requested by the Examining Committee and to ensure that the revised thesis meets FGSR guidelines. Once thesis revisions are completed and approved by the supervisor, the supervisor signs the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form. The form is then completed by the Graduate Coordinator or the Department Chair for submission with thesis to FGSR.

- The student must submit to FGSR one pdf version of the final thesis. ([Instructions - Step #4](#))
- The Department of Cell Biology requires one bound copy.
 - This copy must also include a digital copy of multimedia files.
 - It is customary for a bound copy of the thesis to be given to the supervisor.
- A master's thesis should be bound in a black cover.
- The spine should list: Title (all CAPS), Last name, Degree, and Year Graduated. For thesis binding please contact:

Burke Group Inc (formally McCallum Printing Group Inc.)
2-50 Cameron Library
University of Alberta

Thesis approved by examination committees **must be submitted to FGSR within six months of the date of the Final Oral Examination**. Please note that there are also submission deadlines for each convocation period and registration requirements to consider when submitting the student's thesis.

N.B. If the completed thesis is not submitted to the FGSR within the 6 month time limit, the candidate will be considered to have withdrawn from the program. The candidate must reapply and be readmitted to the FGSR before the thesis can be accepted.

Section 6 - Transferring From the MSc to the PhD Program in Cell Biology

Overview

- MSc students can transfer to the PhD program.
- The transfer to the PhD program procedure aims to prepare students for the elevated expectations made of PhD students compared to MSc students. This is a formal procedure where students, with the help of their supervisor, requests transfer to the PhD program from their supervisory committee and the Department. This request for transfer to the PhD Program is usually part of an annual committee meeting.
- Students provide a written report and give a brief oral presentation that includes a timeline to their first research publication within the next two years. The written report is also submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

Procedure and Requirements

- Prior to initiating the Candidacy Exam, the student must seek approval for transfer to the PhD program from their supervisory committee and the Department within 32 months of entering the Cell Biology graduate program.
- A committee meeting is required to evaluate a student's request to transfer to the PhD program. The report to be discussed at this meeting follows a defined format: 1) Summary of literature; introduction to the student's topic; presentation of preliminary results. 2) Hypothesis. 3) Description of project. 4) A clear outline for a first author research publication with timeline (milestones) for completion to occur within the coming 24 months. Unlike regular committee meeting reports, this document is prepared with the active participation of the supervisor. It focuses on the projected, future research, and must be primarily constituted by the results of hypotheses supported by experiments conducted by the student. Length of the document is at the discretion of the supervisor and student, but should not exceed 5 single-spaced pages, excluding Figures and References.
- Submission of the document must occur at least 2 weeks before the scheduled meeting to the Graduate Coordinator and all members of the supervisory committee. The Graduate Coordinator will forward the document to a member of the Graduate Program Committee if necessary (must not be a member of the supervisory committee).
- At the committee meeting, the student will present their PhD plan in a brief, 20 min maximum presentation that is prepared with the assistance of the supervisor. The supervisory committee members, the Graduate Coordinator or another member of the Graduate Program Committee (not a member of the supervisory committee and delegated by the Graduate Coordinator) will jointly decide on the suitability of the applicant for the PhD program. Successful completion of this step requires a unanimous positive decision that will be communicated by the Graduate Coordinator at the meeting or within one week of the meeting.
- If the final decision from the Graduate Coordinator is positive, the student may proceed to the Candidacy Exam as outlined below.
- If the final decision is negative, the student and supervisor have one more chance to enter the procedure within a time frame determined by the Graduate Coordinator, but otherwise the student must enter the MSc graduation procedure.

Section 7 - The PhD Candidacy Examination

The PhD Candidacy Exam completes formal admission to the PhD program. This examination must be passed within 36 months after commencement of a MSc degree or within 24 months if the student enters the PhD program directly.

Purpose

The purpose of this exam is to establish that the student has:

- An adequate knowledge of Cell Biology related to their thesis research.
- The ability to develop a novel research proposal based upon an original research project.

The candidacy examination has two components:

1. Submission of an original research proposal
2. An oral defense before an Examining Committee:
 - Showing clear understanding of concepts and techniques described in the proposal, and be able to defend the choices they made in constructing the proposal.
 - Demonstrating advanced knowledge within their field of Cell Biology.

The Novel Research Proposal

- The topic of the novel research proposal can encompass any area of Cell Biology.
 - The student's supervisor(s) or committee will not assist in topic selection
 - The student is encouraged to approach other faculty or colleagues to discuss potential topics.
- The topic may be similar, but cannot be directly related to the student's ongoing or planned thesis research.
- The proposal may not overlap with grant proposals submitted by the supervisor.
- The proposal is meant to be an exercise in creativity and for the student to demonstrate ability to prospectively design a set of experiments to test a novel hypothesis.
- The proposal serves as a general focus for questions by the examining committee. While the proposal is a focus, the examining committee can ask questions related to general Cell Biology knowledge on topics not covered in the proposal.
- The proposal must not overlap with work submitted as part of CELL 545 or similar courses.

Step 1 - Initial Approval of The Research Proposal Concept

The student initiates the process by submitting a one-page project summary to the Graduate Coordinator *and* the Supervisory Committee for initial approval of topic and scope.

- The deadline for submission of the proposal topic is based on the proposed date of the exam.
 - Tentative availability of the committee members for the proposed exam date should be confirmed. Tentative availability of potential arm's length examiners, with expertise in the topic chosen by the student should also be confirmed.
- The proposal must first be approved by the Graduate Coordinator.
- The Supervisory Committee has five working days to determine the suitability of the proposal.
- The summary cannot exceed one page.

The summary must include:

- **Title**
- **Hypothesis(es) and Rationale** for the proposed novel research topic.
- **Background:** Provide a brief overview of relevant background information needed to explain why the proposed hypothesis is novel and important.
- **Goal(s) / Research Aims:** Indicate the overall goal(s) and proposed research and the specific aims that will test the novel hypothesis.
- **Methods / Approaches / Expertise:** Provide a brief overview of the various experimental methodologies and how these will address each of the research aims. It is expected that the student will have knowledge of all of the approaches proposed.
- **Expected Outcomes:** Describe the expected outcomes of the proposed research both in terms of specific experimental outcomes as well as generally, highlighting the significance of the proposed research and how it will advance knowledge.

Students are encouraged to include their most original and creative ideas in their proposal. The proposal summary is sent to the Graduate Coordinator and the Supervisory Committee who will have one week to assess suitability of the topic. The decision to accept the topic will be communicated to the student by the Graduate Coordinator and this communication will represent the beginning of the four week preparation time.

Topic is acceptable

If the topic is acceptable then proceed to step 2.

Topic is not acceptable (start again at step 1)

If the topic chosen is not suitable, students will be provided with feedback and have the option to modify the proposal summary or choose a new topic. In either case, the student will have one week to submit a revised or new project summary. Reasons for rejection of a proposed topic could include significant overlap with current lab projects, lack of creativity and scope, scientifically unsound ideas or poor design and writing.

Step 2 - Writing The Research Proposal

- Once a candidacy exam procedure has been initiated, the Student Program Advisor will provide a Candidacy Exam Time Line form that will outline the deadlines of the various steps the student has to follow. The Student Program Advisor will send a Notice of Examining Committee and Examination Date form to the FGSR, a minimum of 3 weeks prior to oral defense.

- Five weeks before the date of the exam, writing the proposal begins. This will allow four weeks preparation time for the student and one week review time for the Committee.

As is customary amongst scientists, the writing of the proposal may involve discussion with peers (*e.g.*, post-candidacy graduate students, Cell Biology Faculty members that are not on the Examining Committee). It is encouraged to seek such assistance in particular during the preparation of the sample summary/summaries and before the actual writing of the proposal. This assistance should neither involve the provision of written material for inclusion in the proposal, nor ideas or other intellectual input to such an extent that it could appear to compromise the student's status as the sole author of the proposal. Obtaining this advice may be particularly valuable in cases where proposed experiments involve techniques with which the student has no direct experience. Students are also encouraged to obtain feedback on the organization and clarity of their written proposal. However, under no circumstances should anyone take part in the writing of the proposal.

The Supervisor and Examining Committee are explicitly excluded from providing assistance in the preparation of the proposal. Moreover, to ensure as much creative input by students as possible, this extends to input derived from a discussion of a potential project at a committee meeting, to the production of preliminary data in the supervisor's laboratory or to the consultation with a supervisor regarding future publications.

Students may wish to obtain from their student peers (*e.g.* CBSA) or other faculty members copies their draft proposals to use as examples to help them organize their own proposal. Note that proposals dealing with subject matter related to the student's proposal must not be obtained or read by the student.

Step 3 - Submission of the Research Proposal to the Examining Committee

The format of the final research proposal submitted to the examining committee should be:

- A cover page with the title of the proposal, the student's name, and the date, time, and location of the examination.
- A one-page research summary (updated from the originally submitted summary).
- The research proposal can be no longer than 10 pages including Tables and Figures.
- A bibliography. This is not included within the 10 page limit
- The following formatting guidelines must be followed:
 - Use 8.5" x 11" page size, printed on one side only.
 - A margin of ¾ inches (2 cm) around the page.
 - Single-spaced 12 point Times New Roman font.
 - Condensed fonts or line spacing is not acceptable.
 - Indicate the page number clearly at the bottom of each page.
 - Additional pages will be discarded before the exam (except references).
 - Tables and Figures should be legible at 100% zoom.
- [Tips for a successful candidacy document preparation](#)

Clarity, feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed research are the primary criteria for evaluating student proposals. The examining committee should be able to grasp the important points during a single reading without undue re-reading. An effective summary is particularly important in this regard.

A good general plan for the research proposal is to set out the goals of the project and present the necessary background in a way that focuses on these goals in the first 3 to 4 pages. The background should provide a concise rationale for a general hypothesis, based on published results. It is important to outline *why* the proposed study is to be undertaken. Students are strongly encouraged to include diagrams that integrate background, rationale and hypothesis and illustrate the relationships between the various components investigated in the proposal. In the remaining pages, the proposed experiments should be organized as specific aims. Each specific aim should be self-contained with a brief introduction and rationale for the experiments (*i.e.* why are the Aims pursued, why are the experiments chosen). It should include clear statements of how the experiments address the hypothesis.

Essential components are methods, experimental design, possible pitfalls, expected outcomes (including how they will be interpreted in the context of the hypothesis or model being tested), and significance of the proposed experiments. Students are expected to employ methodologies that will actually work if the experiments were to be undertaken. Techniques and instrumentation must be relevant to what is proposed. The student can assume that they will have access to any existing, published reagents, constructs, antibodies, etc., and these must be properly referenced; the proposal shall include a description of the generation of any other materials required for the proposed experiments.

The proposal is expected to meet the same scholarly standards that apply to published research papers, as is customary for all original student documents. All statements in the proposal concerning facts, reagents or ideas obtained from the literature must be referenced with primary research papers or review articles; the references, with full authorship and title, must provide direct and accurate support. Database sources and accession numbers must also be included for nucleotide and protein sequences. Any text copied from another source must be set off in quotation marks, and the source must be referenced. The student is expected to have read and understood all references included in their proposal.

After a four week preparation of the written document, submission of the written proposal has to occur as a *hard copy* to the Graduate Coordinator and as email attachment and/or hard copy to members of the Examining Committee and the Student Program Advisor, according to everyone's preference. The submission deadline is 4:00 pm, one week before the exam date as specified in the Candidacy Exam Time Line form.

Step 4 - The PhD Candidacy Oral Examination

An oral examination focused on a defense of the research proposal will be held one week after the submission of the proposal.

The PhD Candidacy Examining Committee

The Examining Committee will consist of a minimum of five full-time faculty members: the Supervisory Committee and two new members. To avoid conflict of interest the new members should be at arm's length from the student. The arm's length examiners should have expertise in the area covered by the research proposal (supervisor will make a short case [2-3 sentences] when submitting the names for approval). It is the Supervisor's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements for the Candidacy Exam.

The exam is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator or their representative. The Exam Chair does not question the student or vote. The Chair does provide a summary of their observations for feedback to the student and to ensure consistency of examinations within the Department.

All examiners must attend the examination in person.

- Teleconference participation is not permitted, except for Adjunct Faculty members who are not in Edmonton.

The examination is divided into the following steps:

- The Chair will ask the student to withdraw from the room and lead a discussion to evaluate if the proposal is defensible. If the document contains fatal flaws, including issues with experimental logic, feasibility or rationale the exam is adjourned (see below) and the student will restart the process starting at Step 1.
 - Note that 'fundability' of a project or unspecified "grantsmanship" issues are not grounds for rejection.
- If the proposal is deemed defensible then are asked to re-enter the room and the PhD Candidacy exam proceeds. *Once the document is considered acceptable, subsequent evaluation must be based on the students performance at the exam and flaws in the document cannot be used retroactively to support a decision to adjourn or fail (see below).*
- The student will give a short (approximately 20 minutes) presentation providing an overview of their proposal, with particular emphasis on the hypotheses and proposed experiments.
- Following this presentation, each examiner will be given approximately 20 minutes to ask questions, starting with members furthest removed from the student's academic program and progressing to the member most closely associated with the student. Generally, examiners will be allowed to interject questions of a related nature. After a brief recess, a second round of questions (maximum of 5 minutes per examiner) may be undertaken to address additional points. The chair will monitor the time and order of questioning.
- Questions from the examiners will be restricted to the proposal, but can include queries on basic knowledge related to the scientific basis and rationale for the experimental strategies outlined in the proposal. The student will be expected to understand the strengths and limitations, as well as potential sources of error, of the proposed methods and strategies. The standards used by the examining committee will take into consideration the relationship of the proposed work to the students specific training and background.

PhD Candidacy Exam Outcomes

- Outcomes of the exam are Pass, Conditional Pass, Fail or Adjourn, as per FGSR rules.
- After the exam has been completed, a Report of Completion of Candidacy Examination form must be sent to the FGSR through the Student Program Advisor.

Following the examination, the student will be asked to withdraw from the examination. The Exam Chair will poll the committee members for a preliminary outcome via secret ballot without discussion. Members of the Examining Committee may vote for one of the following possible outcomes (see also FGSR Manual): Pass, Pass Subject to Conditions, Fail, Adjourn. A “Pass” decision requires all but one committee member to vote for it. If 1 or more members of the Examining Committee recommend outcomes other than “Pass”, then the Chair initiates a discussion, following which a second poll by secret ballot will occur. All outcomes other than “pass” require only a majority vote. The Chair of the Examining Committee may make a decision in the case of a “hung” committee or may refer the matter to the FGSR.

- **Adjourn** - If the proposal is insufficient for proceeding to an oral defense or in the event of compelling, extraordinary circumstances such as a sudden medical emergency taking place during the examination. A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Adjourn.
- **Pass** - Performance was satisfactory. The student is now a PhD candidate.
- **Pass subject to conditions** - This outcome should be chosen only in exceptional cases when performance was acceptable but showed deficiencies in specific, defined areas.
 - The committee must define in detail the specific conditions to be met for the student to continue with their program.: These may include:
 - Additional classes.
 - Revisions to the candidacy proposal. Note that if the committee requests revisions to the proposal, the revisions must be defined explicitly in a written document from the chair of the examination committee, including the acceptable performance needed to satisfy the committee.
 - The conditions set by the Examining Committee and the time frame under which they are to be met will be described in detail in a letter addressed to FGSR and copied to the student. Upon approval of the conditions by FGSR and their being successfully met, the outcome of the exam changes to “Pass” and the student is now a PhD candidate. If the conditions are not met successfully within the timeframe set out in the letter, then the outcome changes to “Fail”.
- **Fail** - Performance was inadequate during the oral exam and/or defense of the proposal. For example, the student was unable to orally address deficiencies in the proposal or did not show adequate background knowledge in areas of Cell Biology related to their thesis research.

For a recommendation of “Fail” the Committee must choose one of three outcomes:

1. If the student's candidacy exam performance was unsatisfactory, but the committee feels that performance and academic research completed to date indicate the student has the potential to perform at the doctoral level, the Examining Committee may recommend *repeating the candidacy exam starting from Step 1*. Unless there are exceptional circumstances one re-attempt will be allowed.
2. *Change of Category to a Master's Program*
3. Withdrawal from the doctoral program. This usually involves discussion with the supervisor and may the Examining Committee should also involve the student in these discussions as appropriate.

For failed candidacy examinations, the Associate Dean of FGSR normally arranges to meet with the candidate and Department representatives before acting upon any Department recommendation. A decision of the FGSR which affects a student's academic standing (*i.e.* required to withdraw or transfer to a Master's program) is open to appeal. If a recommendation of a repeat candidacy is formulated by the Examining Committee, the second candidacy exam is to be scheduled no later than three months from the date of the first candidacy. Upon approval by FGSR, the student will be required to restart the candidacy process, submitting a new project summary (Step 1) different from the previously approved one.

In the event that the student is unsuccessful at the second candidacy exam, the Examining Committee may recommend a *Change of Category to a Master's Program*. If the student's performance was unsatisfactory, and the progress toward a thesis has also been unsatisfactory, the Examining Committee can recommend *withdrawal from the doctoral program*.

In the case of "Adjourn", "Pass Subject to Conditions" or "Fail", The Chair of the Examining Committee must provide the student with a letter outlining the decision of the Examining Committee with a brief description of their exam deficiencies, and send a copy of this letter to FGSR. The Chair will provide a copy of the signed Report of Candidacy Exam form to the student within 2 working days following the exam.

Deadlines

- Students must meet the deadlines as provided by the Student Program Advisor on the Candidacy Exam Time Line. Proposals will only be accepted up to 4:00 p.m. on the submission deadline day.
- Graduate students tend to put-off their Candidacy Exam. This can cause significant problems as the FGSR sets a firm deadline for Candidacy Exams to be completed within 36 months from beginning of a MSc program or 24 months for students that enter the PhD program directly. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by the Cell Biology Graduate Program Committee and FGSR. Note that for students not completing their Candidacy Exam prior to the deadline, the Graduate Program Committee reserves the right to set the exam date.
- For MSc to PhD transfer students it is strongly encouraged that they schedule their Candidacy Exam 24-30 months into their program. For students that join the PhD program directly, they should schedule their Candidacy Exam 12-18 months from starting their program.
- If the PhD Candidacy timeline is interrupted at any point (*e.g. missing deadlines for proposal submission*) the student and the student's supervisor must formally petition both the Graduate Coordinator and the PhD Candidacy Examining Committee for an extension. This must include a written explanation of the extenuating circumstances leading to the request. If the extension is not granted, the exam process will restart at the beginning (Step 1) to start over as outlined above and in the Candidacy Exam Time Line form, with a completely new topic.
- [Further information on doctoral candidacy exams is available in the university calendar.](#)

CELL545

- It is highly suggested that students take CELL 545 in advance of their PhD Candidacy Exam.

Section 8 - Preparation of a PhD Thesis and the Final PhD Examination

Preparation of PhD Thesis

[FGSR sets the formatting guidelines for preparation of the thesis.](#)

- The chapter organization format for a PhD thesis in Cell Biology is:
 - Introduction - Encompassing all aspects of the submitted research
 - Materials and Method - in a single chapter
 - Results - This may include multiple chapters as needed
 - Discussion - Encompassing all aspects of the submitted research
 - References - A single references section for all chapters
 - Addenda - Research or other material that does not stand alone as a chapter.
- The amount of original research expected for a PhD thesis is approximately the same as would comprise two published papers.
- Note that Cell Biology does not allow a format compiled format previously published manuscripts.
- Students are strongly encouraged to complete their thesis well in advance of the submission and defense deadlines to allow their supervisor or others to proofread the document.
- University of Alberta has several services to assist students with academic writing including their thesis.
 - [Centre for Writers \(C4W\)](#)
 - [Academic Success Centre](#)

Student Responsibilities

- Present thesis plan and timeline as a pdf to committee and Student Program Advisor for acceptance a minimum of two months before the examination.
- Prepare thesis in accordance with FGSR and Departmental policy.
- Provide thesis to supervisor for review at least 7 weeks before the exam.
- Fill out Thesis Pre Approval form available from the Student Program Advisor, at least 5 weeks before exam.
- Submission of thesis has to occur as a hard copy in person to the Cell Biology faculty members of the Examining Committee. Submission to the External members may occur electronically by email submission only by the Student Program Advisor.
- Prepare seminar to present before final thesis defense.
- Make revisions if necessary and submit thesis copies to FGSR within six months of the Final Oral Exam.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Complete a Report of Final Supervisory Committee.
- Suggest potential External Examiners to the Department at least two months prior to the examination.

- Contact External Examiners and obtain confirmation of willingness to serve in that capacity.
- Circulate the thesis to the Supervisory Committee and complete a Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form a minimum of five weeks before the examination (form available from the Student Program Advisor).
- Inform the Student Program Advisor of meeting time and place, committee members with a designated examiner and Chair, at least three weeks before the exam.
- Examine amended thesis to confirm completion of revisions recommended by the Examining Committee.

Graduate Coordinator – Examination Chair Responsibilities

- Complete an Invite External Reader/Examiner for Final Doctoral Oral Examination form.
- Complete a Request for Funds for External Examiner Travel.
- Complete the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form.
- In cases of conditional pass/adjourn or fail outcomes, the examination chair must provide the student with a letter explaining the reasons for the outcome and the next steps to be taken. For conditional pass this letter will include all expected conditions to be met by the student.

Overview of the Examination Process

- The Examining Committee shall conduct a final oral examination, based largely on the thesis. The majority of the PhD thesis will consist of results of experimentation conducted by the student, testing an original hypothesis, analysis of the student's results and a discussion of their present and future significance.
- It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that arrangements are made for the candidate's examination in accordance with [FGSR regulations](#). The candidate is not required to make these arrangements.
- The Chair, student and all examiners should have a final draft of the thesis at the examination.
- The candidate will deliver a public seminar of approximately 50 minutes followed by questions.
 - The examining committee cannot ask questions following the seminar.
- It is customary for the candidate to leave the examining room while procedures are determined and explained.
- Most questioning time should be allotted to the External Examiner and least to the Supervisor.
- Typically, each committee member will ask questions for 20 minutes during the first round of questioning and 5 minutes for subsequent rounds. The chair of the exam monitors the time and order of questioning. Questions will continue until the committee signals to the chair that they are able to come to a decision regarding the outcome of the exam.
- A 5 minute break is usually called by the chair between rounds of questioning.
- At the close of the examination, before the student is asked to withdraw, it is often beneficial to ask the candidate if there are any final comments.
- For the adjudication, no final verdict should be rendered without each examiner having given an opinion.
- The overall decision is based on the acceptability of the thesis and the acceptability of the defense.

PhD Examining Committee

In accordance with FGSR regulations, the Final Examining Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members and include the student's Supervisory Committee, one faculty member from outside the

Department, and one External Examiner from outside the University. The External shall be a recognized authority in the special field of research of the candidate's thesis, and will be an experienced supervisor of doctoral students. A person who has previously been associated with the candidate or has other conflict of interest with the student cannot normally be approved as an external examiner. Also note, as per FGSR regulations, the External should not contact the supervisor or student directly regarding the thesis or arrangements related to the examination.

Final Exam Deadlines

Please adhere to the following deadlines when scheduling a final examination:

4 months before: The student presents a thesis plan and timeline as a pdf to their Supervisory Committee and Student Program Advisor. This plan must be approved by each committee member.

2 months before: The Department must recommend an External Examiner to FoMD two months prior to examination. The student will provide a complete draft of the PhD thesis and allow a minimum of two weeks for the supervisor to provide comments on the final draft of the thesis and request revisions if necessary. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide timely comments on all drafts of the thesis.

7 weeks before: After approval by the supervisor, the student will circulate a draft copy of the thesis among members of the Supervisory Committee.

5 weeks before: The committee will sign the Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form indicating that they have examined the draft copy it has sufficient content and is of sufficient quality. Once this form is signed a copy of the thesis should be provided to the student office to be sent to the External Examiner. **Students or supervisors must not communicate with the External Examiner directly.**

4 weeks before: In order for the examiners to have adequate time to appraise the thesis, the Department must supply the External Examiner and the Examination Committee members with a copy of the thesis at least four weeks in advance.

3 weeks before: The exact composition of the Examining Committee and exam date must be recommended three weeks prior to examination with a [Notice of Approval of Oral Examining Committee](#) form sent to the Student Program Advisor and approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

1 week before: The Student Program Advisor distributes to the Chair of the Examining Committee written instructions as to how the exam should be conducted based on Program and FGSR regulations.

Examination

A previously identified Cell Biology faculty member will Chair the examination. The Supervisor cannot act as Chair of the Examining Committee. Further details concerning the administration of the Final Exam can be found online in the FGSR Graduate Program Manual.

The Final Exam shall be immediately preceded with an open departmental research seminar given by the candidate, conducted in the normal manner with a question period and lasting approximately one hour. Immediately following the seminar, the Final Examining Committee and the candidate shall proceed to the oral component of the Final Exam in a closed session and according to Program and FGSR regulations. All examiners must attend the entire examination in person. Teleconference participation is not permitted.

Outcomes of the PhD Thesis Examination

At the close of the examination, the student will be given the opportunity to make final comments on the examination. The student will then be asked to withdraw, and Committee members will be asked to comment on (1) the acceptability of the thesis, and (2) the acceptability of the defense. Following a discussion, the Examining Committee may recommend by a majority vote for one of the following possible outcomes:

- **Pass** - The thesis and defense are approved. All Committee Members shall sign the signature page. Thesis must be submitted to the FGSR office with 6 months of the date of the Final Oral Examination.
- **Pass subject to minor revisions** - Thesis requires minor revisions of editorial nature. All members but the supervisor may sign the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form. The candidate shall make the appropriate revisions. The supervisor will withhold signature until the thesis is satisfactorily amended. The thesis must be submitted to the FGSR office within 6 months of the date of the Final Oral Exam.
- **Adjourned** - defense was unsatisfactory or thesis requires substantial revisions. Committee Members will not sign the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form. The Committee will specify in writing with as much detail as possible the nature of revisions and additional work, and decide upon a date to reconvene no later than 6 months from the date of the examination.
- **Fail** - Thesis rejected.

Report of Examination

- The official minutes of the exam including both specific and summative evaluation of student performance on the exam will be provided as a “Report of Examination” completed by the chair and signed by the examiners, student and the chair at the close or adjournment of the exam.

Submission of Approved PhD Thesis to FGSR

It is the student's responsibility to complete revisions of the thesis requested by the Examining Committee and to ensure that the revised thesis meets FGSR guidelines. Once thesis revisions are completed and approved by the Supervisor, the supervisor signs the Thesis Approval/Program Completion form. The form is then completed by the Student Program Advisor for submission with thesis to FGSR.

Submit to FGSR either one pdf version if submitted electronically or two approved and unbound copies of the thesis. In addition, the Department of Cell Biology requires one bound copy, accompanied by high quality CD/DVD of multimedia files if appropriate. Students should note that it is customary for a bound copy of the thesis in its final form to be given to the Supervisor.

The PhD Thesis should be bound in 375 Green. The spine should list: Title (all CAPS), Last name, Degree, and Year Graduated. For thesis binding, use a thesis binding requisition and submit to:

Burke Group Inc (formally McCallum Printing Group Inc.)
2-50 Cameron Library
University of Alberta

- [FGSR - Thesis Preparation, Requirements and Deadlines](#)



Thesis approved by Examination Committees **must be submitted to FGSR within six months of the date of the Final Oral Examination.** Please note that there are also submission deadlines for each convocation period and registration requirements to consider when submitting a thesis.

As per university policy, a thesis is made freely available to the public as soon as possible after a student's convocation. A general policy of "open access" is also embraced by Tri-Council and other funding agencies. However, a thesis may be embargoed for a specified period of time up to a maximum of two years at the request of the student or their supervisor. The Graduate Coordinator receives and approves these requests. Students must ensure that printing still occurs following the embargo.

Section 9 - Convocation (MSc and PhD)

The University of Alberta holds two convocations each year:

- Spring Convocation in June
- Fall Convocation in November

Students must complete all the following steps **before** the convocation deadlines (early October and mid-April; varies from year to year) in order to convocate.

- Apply for convocation within [Bear Tracks](#): All applications for convocation are subject to review and approval by the FGSR. Applying to convocate on Bear Tracks does not guarantee convocation.
- Ensure the Department has sent the appropriate program completion form to the FGSR.
- Prepare and submit thesis to the FGSR.
- Note that convocation approval requires payment of all outstanding fees to ualberta.
- [FGSR Guidelines for Convocation](#)
- [Office of the Registrar information regarding convocation](#)

Section 10 - Time to Completion for Graduate Degrees (MSc and PhD)

Program	Time Limit
MSc	Four (4) years from first registration in program
PhD (Direct entry)	Six (6) years from first registration in program
PhD (Reclassified from MSc)	Six (6) years from first registration in MSc program

For detailed information, please refer to the [University of Alberta Calendar](#).

MSc

- A final committee meeting to approve the thesis plan must occur such that the final examination takes place no later than 4 years into the program.

PhD

- A final committee meeting to approve the thesis plan must occur such that the final examination takes place no later than 6 years into the program.

Program Extensions

- In exceptional circumstances a student who has failed to complete all the requirements for the degree within the appropriate period specified in Time Limit for Completion of Graduate Programs may be considered for a program extension.
- The Department of Cell Biology has the authority to approve the first program extension.
- Authority for the approval of a second and subsequent program extensions rests with the Dean, FGSR.
- All requests for program extensions will only be considered if there are well-documented reasons specific to a particular type of research that precludes completion within the time limit, or if there are sufficient and substantial unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the student and/or supervisor which prevent completion of the program within the time limits.
- Program extensions may be considered for up to one year at a time.

Leave of Absence While Writing a Thesis

Exceptional circumstances sometimes require students to leave the Department or the University prior to completion of their thesis and/or the student's Supervisory Committee and present a thesis outline. The Committee must agree that no additional experiments are necessary prior to the final examination. After Supervisory Committee approval is granted, the student will be given one year to complete and defend the thesis. If the student has not completed their program by the time the one year period has elapsed, they must apply and be readmitted to the FGSR before a thesis can be approved.

Program Withdrawals

Graduate students who wish to withdraw from a term or from their program should complete a *Withdrawal* form, available from the Department. This must be approved by the Department Chair and FGSR. After processing, a fee adjustment will be calculated, according to the Refund Deadlines in the [University Calendar](#). The date used for calculating any refund is the one on which the FGSR received the *Withdrawal* form. Students who withdraw without completing a *Withdrawal* form will not be eligible for any refund of fees, nor will they be exempt from paying assessed fees that are unpaid. Students wishing to withdraw are strongly advised to consult their supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator, and, if desired, the Associate Dean of FGSR before submitting their request.

Section 11 - Disputes and Their Resolution

[University Policies for Dealing with Difficult Issues](#)

Students ought not to be deterred from raising a concern or complaint with a University official. University officials will not normally deal with anonymous expressions of concern nor will they accept or disseminate records that include obviously malicious or apparently defamatory material. [Code of Student Behavior, Section 30.3.4(3)]. The University official who meets with students must attempt to resolve concerns in a manner that enhances good pedagogical practice and restores harmonious student instructor/supervisor relationships but does not reveal information that the student prefers to have held in confidence. The official must, to the maximum extent possible, honor a student's expressed preference for confidential discussion and informal resolution in a manner that protects the privacy of the student.

- [Additional details can be found in Section 9 of the FGSR Graduate Program Manual.](#)

Step 1 - Informal Resolution

Grievances of an academic nature can arise. Students should first informally approach their instructor or supervisor concerned keeping in mind that they may be unaware that the student perceives that a problem exists. In the event that the conflict cannot be resolved at this level, the student should contact another member of the student's Supervisory Committee familiar with the situation. Students should also contact the Graduate Coordinator. Similarly, Supervisors should communicate their concerns with students to the Graduate Coordinator. In all cases and for every stage, written documentation that the parties involved have communicated and attempted to resolve their differences should be maintained. This can include email or written reports to the Graduate Coordinator.

Step 2 - Formal Resolution

The Graduate Coordinator is responsible for promoting the general interests of the graduate students. They should be consulted as soon as a conflict becomes apparent and updated if informal resolution has failed. The coordinator will arrange for consultation and third-party mediation at the request of the student or their Supervisor. They will listen, advise and do everything reasonable to achieve conflict resolution, including mediation on the student's behalf. Note that all communication with the Graduate Coordinator related to conflict resolution is made in confidence. The decisions of the Graduate Coordinator can be appealed to the Chair of Cell Biology. If local resolution of the conflict is impossible, then the Associate Dean of the FGSR or the Graduate Student Ombudsperson will be approached to pursue next-level conflict resolution.

Step 3 - Changing Laboratory/Supervisor

If a conflict between a supervisor and a graduate student in our program cannot be resolved, the Department of Cell Biology will attempt to facilitate transfer supervision of the student's program to another supervisor. The student's decision to change supervisors should be made in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator. To make the change, the Chair of Cell Biology will notify the existing supervisor of the student's decision. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate student transfers, but in certain circumstances this may not be possible, for example if a suitable supervisor cannot be identified. If no resolution can be accommodated, and the student cannot find a supervisor outside the Department of Cell Biology then the Chair of Cell Biology will have to recommend the student's program be terminated.



Step 4 - Termination of Program

Only FGSR can terminate a graduate student's program. If the Chair of Cell Biology recommends termination of a student's program, this must be communicated in writing to the Dean of FGSR. Possible grounds for termination include failure to maintain adequate academic standing, failure to make sufficient progress in their thesis research, failure to meet the requirements set out in conditional admission and expiry of program time limits.

Section 12 - Cell Biology Student Association

The Cell Biology Student Association (CBSA) provides representation for Cell Biology students at the departmental, Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry levels.

Another important mandate of the CBSA is to provide a variety of extracurricular social and academic events designed for the students of the Cell Biology Department. Every year the CBSA invites a world renowned scientist to present their research to the department and speak to the students in particular. This is a great opportunity for the Cell Biology students to learn more about the different paths and options involved in a career in science. In addition to this event, CBSA provides opportunity to participate in various social activities. From paintballing to curling, from intramural soccer to indoor rock climbing, from a tour of the Alley Kat microbrewery to a simple BBQ, the CBSA is committed to giving all in Cell Biology a full and rich educational experience.

Elections to the CBSA Executive take place in September. Elected positions are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Social Coordinator, and GSA representatives. The duties of each committee member are outlined in the files of the CBSA. The CBSA meets approximately once per month.

Section 13 - Studentships and Scholarships

Competition deadlines and application procedures for studentships change from year to year. The department often has internal deadlines for many applications as well. This list is not meant to be complete and students make themselves aware of all potential award sponsors. Contact the Graduate Program Advisor for up-to-date details on deadlines, application procedures and eligibility requirements.

Below is a list of some of the awards commonly available to students in Cell Biology.

Awards administered through the FGSR:

- [FGSR Awards and Funding](#)
- [FGSR Graduate Program Manual - Section 3. Financial Aid and Awards](#)

Recruitment scholarships:¹

- [Thesis-Based Master's Recruitment Scholarship](#)
- [Doctoral Recruitment Scholarship](#)

Other scholarships:

- [Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship](#)
- [Canada Graduate Scholarships - Masters \(CGS-M\)](#)
- [Andrew Stewart Prize](#)
- [Killam Trust Scholarships](#)
- [Doctoral Tri-Council Scholarships \(NSERC/CIHR\)^{2,3}](#)
- [Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship](#)
- [Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarship](#)
- [Alberta Government Graduate Student Scholarship \(Master's\)](#)
- [Indigenous Graduate Award](#) (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)
- [Dr. Gary McPherson Leadership Scholarship, in the area of disability](#)

Travel awards

- [FGSR Graduate Travel Awards](#)
- [GSA Academic Travel Grants](#)
- [Canadian Cancer Society Travel Awards](#)

Awards administered through the FoMD:

- [75th Anniversary Graduate Student Award](#)
- [Dean's Doctoral Student Award](#)
- [Graduate Student AHS Recruitment Studentships](#)
- [Motyl Graduate Studentships in Cardiac Sciences](#)

¹ Multiple deadlines.

² Includes [Walter H Johns Graduate Fellowship](#) – recipients of eligible NSERC scholarships are automatically considered; Recipients of eligible CIHR scholarships (CGS Master's or Doctoral) must submit CIHR Notification of Award to FGSR.

³ Includes [President's Doctoral Prize of Distinction](#) - recipients of eligible NSERC scholarships are automatically considered; Recipients of eligible CIHR scholarships (CGS Master's or Doctoral) must submit CIHR Notification of Award to FGSR.

Section 14 - Awards for Research Publication Excellence

- [Med Star Award for Graduate Students](#)

Section 15 - Thesis Completion Awards

Thesis completion awards are in recognition of outstanding theses at the master's or doctoral level. Students must have completed, or are nearing completion of their graduate degree program to be eligible for these awards.

- Nomination for these awards is at the discretion of the Department of Cell Biology.
 - As part of their instructions, External Examiners are asked to recommend meritorious theses for consideration for thesis awards. This recommendation must be part of their assessment letter dated before the examination date.
 - It is the policy of Cell Biology that for Departmental support for these awards, the outcome of the PhD or MSc defense must be "Pass". Theses resulting from defenses that were assessed as: "Pass subject to revisions" or "Fail" will not be supported by the Department of Cell Biology
 - The Thesis Examining Committee must indicate support that the Department of Cell Biology should support nomination for these awards, indicated on the Report of Examination.
- [Governor General Gold Medal](#)
 - Nominees for this award satisfy all the Department of Cell Biology the criteria above.
 - Nominees must have achieved the highest academic standing in Cell Biology courses.
- [CAGS/ProQuest-UMI Distinguished Dissertation Award](#)
 - Nominees for this award satisfy all the Department of Cell Biology the criteria above.
 - Nomination for this award must be supported by a letter from the Chair of Cell Biology
- [WAGS/ProQuest Distinguished Master's Thesis](#)
 - Nominees for this award satisfy all the Department of Cell Biology the criteria above except that support from an External Examiner is not needed.
 - Nomination for this award must be supported by a letter from a major professor or Chair of Cell Biology, as well as one additional faculty member.

Section 16 - Appendices

Suggested Timeline for Students in Cell Biology

- General
- MSc stream
- PhD stream

Year 1

- Register (Coursework and Thesis)
- 3 months: Attend first committee meeting
- 12 months: Prepare for and attend annual Committee Meeting
- Ethics Training (GET, ESI and EPR)

Year 2

- Register (Coursework and Thesis)
- Prepare for and attend annual Supervisory Committee Meeting
- MSc Thesis Preparation or Category Change to PhD
- MSc Final Oral Exam
- Submit MSc Thesis

Year 3

- Register (Coursework and Thesis)
- Prepare for and attend annual Supervisory Committee Meeting or PhD Transfer Meeting
- Prepare outline for research proposal and submit to Candidacy Examination Committee
- Prepare and submit Candidacy proposal
- Candidacy Exam (24 months for PhD, 36 months for MSc transfers)

Year 4

- Register (Thesis)
- Prepare for and attend annual Supervisory Committee Meeting

Year 5

- Register (Thesis)
- Prepare for and attend final Supervisory Committee Meeting
- Prepare Thesis
- PhD Final Oral Exam

Suggested Timeline for Supervisors in Cell Biology

- General
- MSc stream
- PhD stream

Year 1

- Advise students on coursework, discuss research topics and plan for thesis research
- Set up the student's supervisory committee
- Arrange first supervisory committee meeting within first 3 months
- Arrange annual supervisory committee meeting

Year 2

- Arrange annual supervisory committee meeting
- Complete form for category change to PhD
- Review and accept the student's thesis plan and complete form
- Submit form for Master's Final Oral Examining Committee
- Forward Master's thesis to committee members
- Arrange for Master's Final Oral Exam

Year 3

- Arrange annual supervisory committee meeting
- Arrange Candidacy Exam (24 months for PhD, 36 months for Master's transfers)
- Arrange for additional committee members for candidacy exam
- Participate in approval of Candidacy Exam proposal topic

Year 4

- Arrange annual supervisory committee meeting

Year 5

- Arrange annual supervisory committee meeting
- Approve student's thesis plan and submit paperwork
- Arrange for Final PhD Oral Examining Committee Members including External
- Review initial drafts of thesis before circulating to the other committee members
- Arrange for Final PhD Oral Exam

Important Dates and Timelines To Remember

Course Registration

- Ongoing as of March 1st

Supervisory Committee Meetings

- First 3 months in program: Initial supervisory committee meeting
- Annual meetings thereafter

Masters Final Oral Examination

- 2 months before: Present thesis plan and timeline to Supervisory Committee and Student Program Advisor.
- 7 weeks before: Provide thesis to supervisor for review before submitting to Examining Committee.
- 4 weeks before: The Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form is signed by the Supervisory Committee.
- 3 weeks before: Submit Notice and Approval of a Master's Final Oral Examining Committee.

Candidacy Examination

- Schedule candidacy exam 32 months after starting graduate program or 18 months after directly entering doctoral program.
- Complete candidacy exam 36 months after starting graduate program or 24 months after directly entering doctoral program.

Before exam:

- 8 weeks before exam: Request the Candidacy Exam time line form from the Student Program Advisor.
- >6 weeks before exam: Topic to be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.
- 5 weeks before: Proposal outline acceptance
- 3-4 weeks before: Inform Student Program Advisor of date and time of meeting, book room and send a completed Notice and Approval of Doctoral Candidacy Examining Committee to FGSR
- 1 week before: Committee is provided with finished proposal

After exam:

- Immediately: Committee completes Report of Candidacy Committee Meeting and Report of Completion of Candidacy or Final Oral Examination.

Final Doctoral Examination

- >4 months before: Student presents thesis plan and timeline to Supervisory Committee and Student Program Advisor.
- 2 months before: Department recommends External Examiner to FGSR. Request Student Program Advisor complete Invite External Reader/Examiner for Final Doctoral Oral Examination form and Request for Funds for External Examiner Travel forms.
- 7 weeks before: Student provides a complete thesis draft to supervisor for comments.
- 5 weeks before: supervisor circulates the thesis among members of the Supervisory Committee and collects signatures on the Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form.
- 1 month before: Student Program Advisor supplies a copy of the final thesis draft to the External Examiner and student supplies copies of the final thesis draft to the remaining examiners and their supervisor.
- 3 weeks before: Student Program Advisor completes Notice and Approval of Doctoral Final Oral Examining Committee form.

Overview of Responsibilities for Graduate Student Training

- This is a modified version of the [FGSR Graduate Program Manual \(Section 1 Areas of Responsibilities\)](#) that includes those responsibilities specific to students in Cell Biology.

Student Responsibilities:

- Ensures annual course registration is complete by 1 July.
- Provides a copy of Class Timetable Notice to the Student Program Advisor as requested.
- Maintains satisfactory academic standing; including attendance at departmental seminars and performance in the laboratory.
- Provides yearly reports of research progress to Supervisory Committee at committee meetings.
- Provides timely drafts of the thesis.
- Provides a completed Annual Report form by January 15th of each year.
- Make themselves aware of the contents of the University Calendar pertaining to graduate students in Cell Biology and takes responsibility for their own programs
- Is aware of scholarship opportunities, and seek advice and assistance from their supervisor and the department in completing applications, etc.
- Is aware of their supervisor's and any departmental expectations related to their research
- Inform the supervisor or advisor regularly about their academic and thesis research progress
- Maintain open communication with their supervisor or advisor and Graduate Coordinator concerning any problem
- Make research results accessible (beyond their appearance in a thesis), in published papers in peer review journals

Supervisor Responsibilities:

- Provides an environment for students that is conducive to research and in which they can grow intellectually
- Provides appropriate guidance to students on the nature of research and the standard expected, and is accessible to give advice and constructive feedback
 - At the beginning of the supervisory relationship, students are made aware, in writing, of the expectations held by the supervisor and the department that are not already defined in the Calendar and the Graduate Program Manual
- Establishes a realistic timetable for completion of various phases of their student's program
- Considers graduate students as junior colleagues in training
- Ensures that there are sufficient material and supervisory resources for each graduate student under their supervision
- Collaborates with new students to establish their supervisory committee as soon as possible after the start of the program and ensures that it maintains contact and formally meets at least once a year with them
- When going on leave or an extended period of absence, ensures that students are adequately supervised by the provision of an acting supervisor. In the case of doctoral students, this should be a member of the supervisory committee
- Ensures that students are aware of their responsibilities and, when appropriate, assists them in meeting these responsibilities
- Sets up committee meetings and examinations with participation and input from their students
- Maintains open communication with students concerning any problem; and in the event of a conflict in the supervisor-student relationship, discusses the issues with the student and the Graduate Coordinator in a timely fashion

- Establishes a Supervisory Committee within the first 3 months to develop an academic plan and makes arrangements for a meeting at least once per year thereafter.
- Sets up a Candidacy Examination committee and makes arrangements for the examination to take place according to departmental regulations.
- Optimally, arranges for final Supervisory Committee meeting in which the thesis plan and timeline are approved within 24 months (2 years) for an MSc student or 60 months (5 years) for a PhD student.
- Sets up Final PhD Examination and makes recommendations to the Department for invitation of External Examiner.
- Ensures that the final thesis is of sufficient quality before distribution to the remaining exam committee members.
- Confirms completion of thesis revisions and completes Thesis Approval/Program Completion form.
- Covers reasonable costs for thesis preparation and binding.

Committee Members Responsibilities:

- Cell Biology expects all Committee members to participate fully in mentoring of graduate students in an ongoing fashion.
- Attend yearly committee meeting.
- Provide assistance as students as the progress towards publication of their results.
- Provide mentoring to students helping them progress towards successful completion of their program.

Department of Cell Biology Responsibilities:

- The Cell Biology Graduate Coordinator is the official representative of the Department of Cell Biology to graduate students.
- Promotes the general interests of the graduate students in Cell Biology.
- The department strives to foster open communication with its students concerning any problem; and in the event of conflict in the supervisor-student or advisor-student relationship, the Graduate Coordinator discusses the issues with students, their supervisor or advisor in a timely fashion.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research:

- The FGSR is responsible for overseeing the general administration of graduate programs, from the admission and registration of graduate students through to convocation. The FGSR office houses documentation related to application, admission, programs, course grades, examinations, and theses.
- The Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research is responsible for setting of minimum entrance requirements and minimum academic standing requirements, with FGSR being responsible for ensuring that these minimum requirements are met; for approving all changes that affect a graduate student's academic standing, and for submitting to the Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for approval any changes affecting both policy and degree regulations. In the event of a serious conflict in the supervisor-student or advisor-student relationship, the FGSR works with the department to attempt to resolve the issues.

Process for Requesting Program Extensions

MSc students in year 4 and PhD students in year 6 should apply for a program extension if there is any possibility that they will not successfully defend their thesis before they enter year 5 or 7 respectively. To request an extension students should submit a Program Extension form, letters of justification from themselves and their supervisor and a timeline outlining a plan for completion.

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL: FIRST REQUEST FOR PROGRAM EXTENSION (MSc Year 5 or PhD Year 7)		
	RESPONSIBILITY	
1.	FGSR	Sends notification email to the student and the department.
2.	Student	Discuss with supervisor and Graduate Coordinator the exceptional circumstances requiring an extension.
3.	Student	Completes and signs the Program Extension form.
4.	Supervisor	Signs the form, supporting the request.
5.	Student	Submits Program Extension form along with a letter of justification outlining why an extension is requested and a timeline to thesis completion to the Student Advisor.
6.	Graduate Coordinator/ Department Chair	Approves the form, approving a first request for an extension of program completion.
7.	Department	Communicates the decision to the student.
8.	Department	Notifies FGSR. No supporting documentation required.
9.	FGSR	Updates the Student Record.

Subsequent Program Extension requests must be submitted to the FGSR along with a written explanation from the student and supporting letters from the supervisor and the Department which will include a summary of their progress to date and expected date of completion .

FGSR APPROVES: SUBSEQUENT REQUESTS FOR PROGRAM EXTENSION (MSc Year 6+, PhD Year 8+)		
	RESPONSIBILITY	
1.	FGSR	Sends notification email to the student and the department.
2.	Student	Discuss with supervisor and Graduate Coordinator the exceptional circumstances requiring an extension.
3.	Student	Completes and signs the Program Extension form.
4.	Student	Provides the completed Program Extension Form and an explanatory letter to the supervisor. Include an unofficial transcript.
5.	Supervisor	Signs the form, supporting the request. supervisor forwards complete package to Graduate Coordinator
6.	Graduate Coordinator/ Department Chair	Signs the form, supporting a request for a second or subsequent extension of program completion.
7.	Department	Submits the form with supporting documentation to the FGSR.
8.	FGSR	Makes a decision on second or subsequent request for extension.
9.	FGSR	Updates the Student Record.
10.	FGSR	Communicates the decision to the student (with a copy to the Department).

Process for Requesting Leaves of Absence

The program will consider **Leaves of Absence** for exceptional circumstances. Time spent during Leaves of Absence do not count toward student's time in the program.

DEPARTMENT APPROVES: MEDICAL OR PARENTAL LEAVES OF ABSENCE		
	RESPONSIBILITY	
1.	Student	Informs supervisor and department of circumstances requiring a Leave of Absence and provides supporting documentation.
2.	Student/Department	Completes the Application for Leave of Absence form.
3.	Student	Signs the form.
4.	Supervisor	Signs the form, supporting the request.
5.	Graduate Coordinator/ Department Chair	Signs the form approving a Leave of Absence on medical or parental grounds.
6.	Department	Communicates the decision for the Leave of Absence to the student.
7.	Department	Submits the form and supporting documentation to the FGSR.
8.	FGSR	Updates the Student Record. Suspends registration during the time period of the Leave of Absence .

- If Department decides not to grant a medical or parental leave, this decision can be appealed to FGSR.

The FGSR approves **Leaves of Absence** on compassionate or other grounds:

FGSR APPROVES: COMPASSIONATE LEAVES OF ABSENCE		
	RESPONSIBILITY	
1.	Student	Informs supervisor and department of circumstances requiring a Leave of Absence and provides supporting documentation.
2.	Student/Department	Completes the Application for Leave of Absence form.
3.	Student	Signs the form.
4.	Supervisor	Signs the form, supporting the request.
5.	Graduate Coordinator/ Department Chair	Signs the form, supporting the request for a Leave of Absence on compassionate grounds.
6.	Department	Submits the form and supporting documentation to the FGSR. Include an unofficial transcript.
7.	FGSR	Makes a decision on Leave of Absence on compassionate grounds.
8.	FGSR	Updates the Student Record. Removes registration during the time period of the Leave of Absence .
9.	FGSR	Communicates the decision to the student (with a copy to the Department).

Who is Responsible for What for the PhD Candidacy Exam

Student Responsibilities

- To begin the process (Step 1) the student supplies a one page summary to the Graduate Coordinator and to their Examining Committee.
- Once the topic is approved the student then contacts the Student Program Advisor to receive a Candidacy Exam Time Line form that specifies all the deadlines associated with the exam.
- The student has four weeks to prepare a proposal based on the chosen topic for submission.
- A week before the exam, the student submits the completed proposal to the Examining Committee and Exam Chair (printed copy or email).
- The student prepares a 20 minute presentation for the examination.

Graduate Coordinator Responsibilities

- Facilitates the approval or rejection of the submitted project summary page in conjunction with the Supervisory committee.
- Communicates topic acceptance or rejection to the student.
- Chairs the exam or delegate this duty.
- Completes and submits Report of Candidacy Committee Meeting and Report of Completion of Candidacy or Final Oral Examination through the Student Program Advisor.

Student Program Advisor Responsibilities

- Provides student with the Candidacy Exam Time Line form.
- Informs Examiners and Chair of the date, time, and location of the exam.

Supervisor/Committee Responsibilities

- Approve or reject project summary within one week of receipt from the Graduate Coordinator.
- The supervisor will arrange the room (and projector) booking for the exam through the Student Program Advisor.
- The supervisor will set date for the Candidacy Exam with a maximum of four weeks for preparation and one week for review prior to exam.

Key Dates for Thesis Submission and Convocation

[This is a simplified version of the detailed information is from the FGSR:](#)

For thesis submitted between:

September 1 and Fall Convocation Deadline

- Students are not required to register for the Fall term
- Once the thesis is submitted, FGSR will add THES 910 registration

Fall Convocation Deadline and 5th business day in January

- Students must be registered for the Fall term
- Fees assessed according to the registration

Fifth business day in January and January 31

- Students are not required to register for the Fall term
- Once the thesis is submitted, FGSR adds THES 910 registration

February 1 and Spring Convocation Deadline

- Student
- Fees will be assessed according to the registration

Spring Convocation Deadline and August 31

- Students must be registered for both terms of the previous Fall/Winter
- Students are required to register for the Spring and Summer sessions, separately.

Locating Forms Described in the Graduate Student Manual

The following forms are available online from Cell Biology:

- Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis
- Candidacy Exam time line
- Report of Candidacy Exam
- Report of Supervisory Committee Meeting
- Graduate Student Annual Report

[FGSR Forms Cabinet](#)

- Application for Readmission
- Name Change
- Appointment of Supervisor(s) and Supervisory Committee – Masters/Doctoral
- Notice of Examining Committee and Examination Date – Masters/Doctoral
- Application for Doctoral Program Requirements Extension
- Report of Completion of Candidacy Examination
- Approve External Reader or Examiner for Final Doctoral Oral Examination
- Request for Funds for External Examiner Travel
- Thesis Approval/Program Completion
- University of Alberta Thesis/Dissertation Non-Exclusive License
- Restrict Thesis Access
- Recommendation for Change of Category or Academic Probation
- Program Extension
- Application for a Leave of Absence
- Transfer of Department
- Individual Development Plan and Professional Development Requirement Form

Revision History

- November 14, 2018 Transferred to Google Docs for more efficient editing. Imported from an existing MS word document (multiple authors, most recently Dr. Thomas Simmen, previous Graduate Coordinator until May 2018) Andrew Simmonds, Graduate Coordinator
- Revisions December 2018 - January 2019 by the [Student/Faculty Advisory Sub-Committee](#) for the September 2019 edition.
 - Compliance with new FGSR guidelines regarding program requirements.
 - Added statements clearly stating applicability of yearly changes in the manual to students.
 - Repeated material moved to appendices.
 - Removal of items pertaining to students prior to 2011 (no longer needed)
 - General editing for content and clarity.
 - Correction of outdated links.
 - Instructions for applying to the program were removed and placed in separate document as they would not be applicable for students that are already in the program.
- March 2019 - Submitted to Graduate Committee.
- July 2019 - Comments/suggestions from Graduate Committee incorporated.