

Comprehensive Examinations

1. An early meeting of the Ph.D. Student's Supervisory Committee will be a Comprehensive Examination. The purpose of this oral examination is to evaluate the student's readiness to successfully complete the PhD degree. The exam will test the student's overall knowledge of chemistry, including fundamental material oriented towards the student's chosen branch of the field as well as the details of their own research program. This exam also serves as a formal approval of the student's proposed research program.
2. The Comprehensive Examination should be held within 18 to 20 months of the student's being initially registered in the Ph.D. program (or within 6 to 8 months after first year transfer from the M.Sc. program). The exam is conducted in a format similar to regular Supervisory Committee meetings, i.e. starting with a short (~20 minutes) talk on his/her research plans (and/or progress) and leading into research questions and then into more comprehensive questions. At least half of the examination time will involve questions of a fundamental or comprehensive nature. The student should prepare a report and proposal for future work which is given to all members, including the chair, of the committee about one week before the exam.
3. The examining committee expects to find:
 - strong analytical, problem-solving and critical thinking abilities
 - required breadth and in-depth knowledge of the discipline
 - required academic background for the specific doctoral research to follow
 - ability to conduct independent and original research
 - ability to communicate knowledge of the discipline
4. The result of the Comprehensive Examination will be one of the following:
 - a) **Pass.** The student has fully met the requirements for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination and the proposed research program is satisfactory.
 - b) **Pass with conditions.** The student has partially met the requirements for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination. Certain minor deficiencies have been identified, and the student will be given specific directions by his/her Supervisory Committee for remedial action.
 - c) **Re-examination.** The student has not met the requirements for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, and the Supervisory Committee recommends a re-examination. The re-examination **MUST** be held within 24 months of the original student start date. A student failing the second Comprehensive Examination will normally be asked to withdraw from the Ph.D. program as outlined below in 4d.
 - d) **Fail.** The student has not met the requirements for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, or the proposed research program is not satisfactory, and the Supervisory Committee does not recommend that the student continue in the Ph.D. program. A fail recommendation can have two possible outcomes:
 - a. **Transfer to M.Sc. program** – The student will be asked to transfer to the M.Sc. program and can complete their research in this program.
 - b. **Withdrawal from program** – The student will be required to withdraw from the program.

Guidelines

1. In addition to the (normally) four member Supervisory Committee (the Research Director, member chosen by the student, member chosen by the Research Director, and member chosen by the Department), one other faculty member will be the Chair of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The Chair will moderate the exam and the following in camera discussion.
2. Approximately one month prior to the exam, the student may arrange individual meetings with members of their Supervisory Committee. During this optional meeting, the Committee member may communicate what areas of chemistry they expect the student to be proficient in, and may suggest textbooks or other resources which the student should review prior to the exam.
3. One week before the meeting, the candidate should circulate to the committee (including the Chair) a formal report on his/her research and proposal of future research – this report should normally be about 20 pages (possibly with an appendix), double-spaced, in the format of a chemistry journal article with Introduction,

New Guidelines Effective September 2015

Experimental (including data such as spectra), Results and Discussion, Proposed Future Work and References sections.

4. The exam will commence with a short talk by the student summarizing the project, work accomplished thus far, and proposal for future work, this should be limited to a maximum of 20 minutes.
5. Examinations should be about two to two and one-half hours in length, and should not be scheduled if less than a two hour period is available.
6. At least half of the examination time should be concerned with questions that emphasize fundamental material oriented towards the student's chosen branch of chemistry (i.e., inorganic, organic, physical, analytical etc.).
7. After the conclusion of the exam, an in camera meeting will be held to decide on the outcome of the exam. The discussion will be moderated by the Chair, and both the performance in the Comprehensive exam, and the proposed research program will be evaluated. The student will be informed of the outcome by their research supervisor as soon as possible following the meeting.