

PhD Candidacy Examination Procedural Guide

Procedure for Ph.D. Candidacy Exam

All Ph.D. candidates are required to undergo their Candidacy Examination within 20 months of their initial registration. The Candidacy Examination comprises two evaluations: a written exam and an oral exam. The student must first pass the written exam before proceeding to the oral exam.

1. Written Exam:

- The written exam is ideally comprised of one question from each member of the Examining Committee. Each question will be based on material from a book chapter or journal article that is related to the proposed project of the Ph.D. candidate.
- The duration of the written exam is 3 hours. All questions assigned should be answerable in this time frame (for example, if there are 4 committee members asking one question each, each question should be answerable in 45 minutes.)
- The Examining Committee will provide the student with study material covered in the written exam a **minimum** of six weeks prior to the exam date. The written exam may include problem-solving and/or essay-type questions on the fundamental physics and professional topics related to the student's research field.
- The Program Director will return a copy of the marked exam paper to the student within 1 week of the written exam. One copy of the marked exam paper will also be sent to the Supervisor(s) by the Program Director.
- A student who receives a failing grade on the written exam (i.e. a grade of less than 73%), will be given an opportunity to write another written exam within 2 months of the date of the failed exam. A **second failing grade** for the written exam will result in **withdrawal** from the program.

2. Oral Exam

- Upon successful completion of the written exam the PhD student will proceed to the oral component of the exam ideally within 2 weeks.
- Two weeks prior to the oral exam, the student will submit a written report of his PhD project proposal to the Program Director. The written proposal will be 15-30 pages (including all figures and references) using 12 point Serif font (e.g. Times New Roman) and 1.5 line spacing, and will typically include the following sections:

- I. Introduction
- II. Critical literature review
- III. Objectives of the proposed research
- IV. Methodology
- V. Expected contributions
- VI. Progress to date
- VII. Timeline
- VIII. References

The following items are relevant to the oral component of the PhD Candidacy Examination:

- During the exam, the candidate will be asked to present his/her research proposal within a period of about 20 minutes, and will then be questioned by each member of the examination committee.
- The questions posed by the Examining Committee members must be related (directly or indirectly) to the research proposal and may be extension of questions asked in the written exam.
- The Committee Chair may pose questions to the candidate, whether or not he/she is an official examiner.
- There is no specified time limit for the oral component of the examination; however, its duration should be between 2 and 3 hours.
- The Examining Committee will assess the relevance and feasibility of the proposed work and the student's ability to complete the work. While it is not necessary to present any preliminary data, presentation of such data would certainly strengthen the proposal.
- The oral exam is pass/fail and is decided through a majority vote by the committee member. The Committee Chair will vote only in the case of a tie.
- A student who receives a failing grade on the oral exam will be given an opportunity to attempt the oral exam a second time within 3 months of the failed oral exam date. A **second unsatisfactory grade** for the oral exam will result in **withdrawal** from the program.