Department of Economics PhD Candidacy Examination Requirements

1. Faculty of Graduate Studies Candidacy Examination

General regulations for candidacy examinations for PhD students are specified in the Graduate Studies Calendar. This document provides details specific to the Department of Economics program.

2. Department Candidacy Examination Requirements

Candidacy examinations in the Department require passing two written comprehensive examinations selected by the student’s supervisor and committee members already identified at the time of registration into the PhD program from the topics of microeconomic theory, macroeconomic theory and econometrics.

In addition, students must successfully pass an oral examination on their dissertation proposal. The precise format, requirements and timing of this oral examination are set by the student’s supervisor in consultation with identified supervisory committee members.¹

Consistent with Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations, admission to candidacy must be completed within three years of enrolment in the PhD program and at least six months before the final defense of the dissertation. PhD students are required to register continuously for ECON 693 until both the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation proposal oral examination are completed and a decision on candidacy has been submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

(a) Timing of Comprehensive Examinations

The comprehensive examinations are offered twice in the calendar year: May or June and September.

The exact dates for the examinations, which vary from year to year, are announced well in advance to allow students to plan the examinations.

Both examinations must be taken at a student’s first attempt.

Students entering the program in September are normally expected to take the comprehensive examinations in May or June of their first year in the program. Students who have not successfully completed the comprehensive examinations by the beginning of their second year will not normally be eligible for a renewal of their graduate awards, fellowships or scholarships.

(b) Structure and Content of the Comprehensive Examinations

The exact structure of the examinations (duration, number of questions, etc.) is made available to the students two weeks prior to the examinations.

¹ The supervisory committee consists of the supervisor and (at least) one other Departmental member and (at least) one external member. All members must be on the Faculty of Graduate Studies membership list. Formation of this committee is undertaken by the supervisor in consultation with the student.
The examinable material for the examinations will be provided to students. Students are ultimately responsible for the preparation of the Syllabus material.

Past examinations are available from the Graduate Secretary in BEC 360 and provide a general guide to type of questions asked. Past examinations also serve as suitable practice for exam preparation; however, students should note that prior to the SPRING 2012 examinations, micro and macro theory were combined in a single exam. As such, older exams may not reflect the format and structure of the theory examinations.

(c) Comprehensive Examination Committees and Grading

A comprehensive examination committee composed of a minimum of two faculty members will be formed for each comprehensive exam. Each committee is responsible for setting and grading the comprehensive examination under its responsibility.

Each comprehensive examination is graded independently of the other. For purposes of grading, comprehensive examination papers are anonymous.

(d) Comprehensive Examination Results

The comprehensive examination committees provide the Graduate Advisor with comprehensive examination results of Pass, Deferred or Fail for each student.

Comprehensive examination results are reviewed by the Department’s Graduate Committee. The Graduate Committee then approves one of the following decisions:

1. The comprehensive examinations have been passed.
   
   This outcome can be expected if the student achieves a Pass or Good result in each of the two comprehensive examinations. (PASS.)

2. The comprehensive examination decision has been deferred and one or both comprehensive examination(s) is to be re-taken at the next offering. (DEFERRED.)
   
   This outcome can be expected if it is the first attempt at the comprehensive examinations and if the student receives a Fail on one or both of the examinations.
   
   Only examinations that are failed are re-taken.

3. The comprehensive examinations have been failed. (FAILED.)
   
   This outcome can be expected when a student has failed one or both comprehensive examinations for a second time.

   Failure of the comprehensive examinations results in a failure of the candidacy exam and the Faculty of Graduate Studies is informed of the student’s result.

   The Graduate Advisor will inform the student’s supervisor of the results of the comprehensive examinations.

(e) Feedback on Comprehensive Examination Results

Each student is informed in confidence and in a timely fashion of their performance on each of the two comprehensive examinations (Pass, Deferred or Fail) by their supervisor and/or the Graduate Advisor.
3. Oral Examination of the Dissertation Proposal

(a) A student’s supervisory committee determines the format and the requirements of the oral examination of the dissertation proposal and communicates this information to the student in writing. A copy of this document is placed in the student’s file.

(b) Typically, the dissertation proposal oral examination committee consists of the supervisory committee. However, other members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies may form part of this examination committee, as deemed appropriate by the supervisory committee.

(c) The supervisor will arrange for the oral examination to be chaired by a Departmental member who is not part of the oral examination committee. The Chair will ensure that the examination proceeds in the usual manner for oral defenses.

(d) Oral examinations are open to the public. Members of the public may be granted the privilege to ask questions, at the discretion of the Chair of the defense.

(e) The oral examination of the dissertation proposal has one of three possible results:

1. The oral examination has been passed.
2. The oral examination has been failed.
3. The oral examination has been deferred.

A deferral can be granted by the oral examination committee when a student’s performance did not deserve a pass, but when it is judged that a second attempt at the oral examination is desirable.

The student’s supervisor will inform the Graduate Advisor in writing of the timing and structure of the oral examination and will report the results to the student and Graduate Advisor in a timely fashion. A copy of this information will be provided to the Graduate Secretary for inclusion in the student’s file.

4. Results of the Candidacy Examination

A PhD student who has passed both the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation proposal oral examination has passed the candidacy examination.

Failure of the comprehensive examinations or failure of the oral examination results in a failure of the candidacy examination. In the event the candidacy examination is failed, the student will leave the PhD program.

Once it has been determined that a student has passed or failed the candidacy examination, the Faculty of Graduate Studies is informed of the results and the student is given the corresponding grade for ECON 693.