



**School of Nursing  
University of British Columbia  
PhD Program**

**ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY**

**The requirements for a doctoral student to be admitted to candidacy are:**

- successful completion of all required course work
- successful completion of the comprehensive examination
- approval of the dissertation proposal by the Supervisory Committee

The process for approval of the dissertation proposal occurs within the context of the **oral candidacy examination**, which assesses the student's ability to carry out the research component of the PhD program. This examination must be successfully completed within 36 months of admission.<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose**

The purpose of the oral candidacy examination is to ensure that the student has selected an appropriate problem for the dissertation and that a sound plan of action has been developed. The examination is based on the dissertation proposal, which must be circulated to the examining committee at least two weeks before the examination. Questioning will focus on the research project, but can include any peripheral areas that are considered relevant. The student is expected to demonstrate:

- familiarity with the literature in the research area
- familiarity with fields related to the research area
- ability to justify the need for the proposed research
- ability to defend the research design
- ability to defend the methods of analysis
- ability to interpret preliminary data
- ability to reason and integrate during the questioning

**Format**

The student will present a synopsis of the dissertation proposal and then answer questions from the examiners and members of the audience. The student may speak from notes, and may use audio-visual equipment, but must not read the synopsis. The presentation should be 20 to 30 minutes in length, but not longer, and should not be interrupted by questions.

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<sup>1</sup> The Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies has determined that “a student who is not admitted to candidacy within 36 months from date of initial registration must withdraw from the program. Extension of this period may be permitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies in exceptional circumstances.”

Policy Reference: [Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies Policy: Advancement to Candidacy](#)



## Preparation

The supervisor and committee members must agree that the proposal is ready for examination.

The following must be completed **at least two weeks in advance** of the examination:

1. In consultation with the supervisor and committee members, the student will request a specific examination date and time through the [Student Tracking System \(STS\)](#).
  - a. To do this, login with your [Campus Wide Login \(CWL\)](#)
  - b. Select Milestones from the right hand side menu
  - c. Select the “Calendar” icon & select a date
2. The supervisor will be prompted by STS to approve this request. *In doing so, the supervisor is indicating that the committee has agreed that the proposal is ready for examination* and at least two committee members are available on that date.
3. Once the supervisor has approved the requested date for examination, the PhD Program Coordinator will identify a Chair for the candidacy exam.
4. The student is responsible for submitting a copy of the proposal to the Chair via email. *This must be the version that was approved for examination.*
5. The supervisor is responsible for [booking a room](#), and submitting information about the exam (student name (as registered with UBC), student number, proposal title, date, time, & location) to the Student Services Office so a public announcement can be prepared.
  - a. The announcement will be sent 3 weeks before the exam, with reminders in the Grad Student e-Newsletter. A reminder will be sent to Faculty (Regular & Affiliate) 1 week in advance.

## Examination Committee

The examination shall be chaired by the PhD Program Coordinator, or designate. The examining committee shall be composed of at least two members of the supervisory committee (the supervisor must be in attendance). It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that there will be a quorum. Committee members who are not able to attend the examination may submit written questions to the committee chair; the chair will invite the supervisor to pose these questions during the exam.

The role of the Chair is to:

- determine if a quorum is present (examination will not proceed without quorum)
- open and close the examination proceedings
- intervene if questioning becomes inappropriate
- deal with any behaviour that interferes with the proper conduct of the examination
- moderate the *in camera* discussion on the merit of the student’s performance (see *Assessment of Student’s Performance*)

The role of members of the Examining Committee is to:



- ask substantive questions of the student
- seek clarification of points not adequately covered

Oral candidacy examinations are public and the audience will also be invited to pose questions of the doctoral student.

## Examination Proceedings

1. Chair will call upon members of the examining committee to question the student (the supervisor should be the last to question the student)
2. Chair will call for questions from the audience
3. Chair will call for further questioning by the examining committee, asking the student to address or clarify any details that may not have been adequately covered in previous rounds of questioning
4. Chair will request that the student and all others who are not on the examination committee to leave the room
5. Chair will call for an *in-camera* discussion for the examining committee to make recommendations with respect to the research proposal itself and to candidacy.
6. Chair will recall the student to the room and inform them of the outcome of the exam. At this point the student is responsible for producing the completed "[Recommendation for Advancement to Candidacy](#)" Form to the Chair for Chair & Supervisor signature. This form is then submitted directly to Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies in hard copy, and a PDF copy is submitted to [student.services@nursing.ubc.ca](mailto:student.services@nursing.ubc.ca) for retention in the student's file.

## Assessment of Student's Performance

Because the examination is integrative in nature, it is taken and passed or failed in its entirety. The student must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committee that she or he possesses an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the dissertation and that he or she has the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level.

At the end of the examination, the examining committee shall discuss the student's performance *in camera*. The Chair of the examining committee will recall the student, and in the presence of the examining committee, will inform the student of the recommendations that are to be made to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

The committee chair is responsible for entering the exam outcome in STS.

If the student passes, the committee chair will complete all necessary Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies documentation to recommend that the student be advanced to candidacy. If a student fails, the committee reserves the option to offer the student a re-examination, which must occur within six months. A second failure will result in the student's withdrawal from the graduate program.