

POLICY AND REGULATIONS FOR THE PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

DEPARTMENT OF INTEGRATED STUDIES IN EDUCATION, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

OBJECTIVES

The Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam is one component of the ad hoc doctoral program in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. The overall objective of the Comprehensive Exam is to ensure that Ph.D. candidates have sufficient knowledge in their areas of study, are able to conduct research, and can prepare scholarly contributions (both written and oral). In addition, the Comprehensive Exam serves as preparation for the dissertation by (a) facilitating the development of a solid conceptual base for research in the student's area of study and (b) ensuring that the student's knowledge is sufficiently broad and conceptually structured to provide a solid basis for thesis research as well as future research and scholarly activities.

In terms of specific objectives, the Comprehensive Exam serves to:

- assess the breadth and depth of conceptualization of a candidate's knowledge in his/her field of study
- assess a candidate's ability to situate the questions being studied in his or her dissertation research within the larger intellectual and research contexts of the field
- assess a candidate's ability to evaluate research critically, review the research literature, and address gaps or unsolved problems in the field
- assess a candidate's ability to communicate effectively and articulate knowledge, reasoning, and research approaches in the field of study through written and oral work

DOCTORAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the doctoral program and under the guidance of his or her supervisor, a student should establish a tutorial relationship with each member of the Doctoral Advisory Committee. The student is then responsible for maintaining contact with committee members in order to ensure their facilitative role in the design of the Comprehensive Exam.

TIMING AND REGISTRATION

Doctoral students normally write their Comprehensive Exam near the end of the second year once other course requirements have been completed. The results of the exam determine whether they are permitted to continue in the program. In the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, students working on their Comprehensive Exam must register in EDEC 701, after consulting with their Supervisor.

FORMULATION OF QUESTIONS

The members of the student's Doctoral Advisory Committee will discuss with the student the possible questions to be addressed in the Comprehensive Exam. Decisions about the format (and number) of papers for the Comprehensive Exam are made by the members of the Doctoral Advisory Committee in discussion with the student.

FORMAT

The Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines include a variety of formats that can be used for the Comprehensive Exam. In the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, the most common format requires (a) the completion of two research papers followed by (b) an oral examination consisting of a defense of the research papers.

The written component usually involves the assignment of two questions. Students are required to write a response to each question (approximately 25-30 pages each), normally over a period of one semester, during which time they may seek guidance from their supervisor (other committee members are not expected to provide feedback until the oral examination). Upon completion of the written version of the comprehensive exam, the student submits a copy of the research papers to each member of the Doctoral Advisory Committee and a date is then set for the oral examination. At the oral examination, arranged by the student's supervisor, the student is required to prepare an oral presentation/summary of each research paper and to respond to questions from each member of the Doctoral Advisory Committee.

EVALUATION

At the conclusion of the oral exam, the Doctoral Advisory Committee meets first without the student to discuss the student's written and oral performance and to agree on a grade of P (pass) or F (fail), a global assessment taking equal account of the student's written and oral performance. Immediately following agreement, the Doctoral Advisory Committee meets again with the student to discuss his/her written and oral performance, justifying the assigned grade. The committee will subsequently provide written feedback to the student. In the event of a failure, one repeat of the Comprehensive Exam, in whole or in part, is allowed. Following a second failure, the student will be asked to withdraw from the Ph.D. program. For further information concerning repeats, reviews, and reassessment, see Section 8.4 of the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies *General Information, Regulations and Research Guidelines*.