



Doctoral Candidacy Papers Policy and Regulations

Preamble

An important milestone in the Doctoral Program in Educational Studies is doctoral candidacy. It marks a transition for doctoral students as they move from the process of exploring their research interests to articulating, shaping, and conducting their own dissertation work.

The main objective of the DISE doctoral candidacy process is to ensure the preparedness of doctoral students for their dissertation research. More specifically, this objective entails the student's ability to:

- Identify, trace, critically engage with, and analyze research traditions (theoretical and methodological) for their relevance to the research interests of the doctoral student.
- Articulate some of the important questions that have been addressed in the doctoral student's area of research.
- Articulate why the research interests of the doctoral student are most usefully positioned in particular areas and how those lines of inquiry or debates may usefully be extended, probed, adapted, or taken in new directions.
- Mobilize particular theoretical and methodological scholarly approaches of interest to the doctoral student.
- Reflect on their evolving scholarly identity, disciplinary, and ways of knowing in their fields.

Main components of the candidacy process

The main components of the candidacy process include the following:

- A written plan for the written candidacy papers (CP) (5-10 double-spaced pages, including bibliography).
- Written candidacy papers (either two or three or another format to be approved by the GPD) in a format to be discussed by the doctoral student and advisory committee members (for a total of 50-60 double-spaced pages, excluding references).
- A scholarly presentation (20-30 min.) and discussion (1-2h) of the student's CP.

Candidacy papers plan

The purpose of the CP plan (5-10 double-spaced pages, including bibliography) is to clarify the shape, scope, and approach of the student's CP. Generally, it should outline:

- The doctoral student's research interests that have led to the pursuit of doctoral work, providing the necessary context for what the student is interested in studying and why.
- The scholarly literature (theory, research, methodology, method) the doctoral student would like to explore. The purpose of the review is to usefully situate and guide the development of the student's research interests.
- The questions that will guide the reading and writing for the CP.
- An initial bibliography for the CP.



- The specific format the CP is to take, given the nature of the doctoral student's work and background (see "Written candidacy papers" below)

As a part of the CP plan process, doctoral students and their advisory committees will discuss the CP plan.

Written candidacy papers

Once the plan has been accepted, the next step is the writing of the candidacy papers, which together normally amount to 50-60 double-spaced pages of polished work (excluding references). The main goal is to situate one's research interests in ongoing debates in one's field of study.

Given the diversity of disciplinary and other backgrounds of doctoral students in DISE, this goal can be achieved in different ways. The CPs can, therefore, take different forms, to be determined in consultation with the doctoral advisory committee to fit the research needs and interests of the student and to support the student's preparation for the dissertation. Regardless of the specific format, the written CP process involves scholarly dialogue with the Supervisor, including feedback on a full first draft. Depending on the needs of the student, supervisors may also provide feedback on partial drafts and on additional drafts.

Before starting the CP process, the supervisor and student should discuss expectations for feedback.

Scholarly presentation of candidacy papers

Once the written candidacy papers have been submitted to the committee, doctoral students schedule an oral scholarly presentation of their candidacy work. These can be public or not, depending on the student's wishes. The scholarly presentation begins with students providing a formal 20-minute overview of their candidacy work as well as the thinking about next steps in his or her doctoral work that the candidacy work has inspired. This presentation is followed by questions, feedback and a discussion of the student's work and research directions.

Normally the committee members are given 4 weeks to read the papers, but may need less (the student should check with their committee members in advance). They bring their oral and written feedback and questions to the "defense"/scholarly presentation.

Prior to the presentation, the student or supervisor will need to book a room (for defenses in person) or send a Zoom link (for remote defenses). The student and committee will need to plan for approximately 2 hours in total for the presentation, question, and discussion.

Timing and Registration

McGill expects doctoral students to have completed their candidacy papers by the end of their second year in the program. The results of the exam determine whether students are permitted to continue in the program. In DISE, students working on their candidacy papers must register for EDEC 701, after



consulting with their supervisor. If the student does not complete the exam within that semester, a grade of HH ('incomplete') will be posted on the student's transcript, to be replaced when the exam is submitted (see Evaluation, below).

Candidacy Process and Timeline

The candidacy process is facilitated by a dialogue between the doctoral student and supervisor.

Although the exact sequence of the candidacy process will depend on the nature of the student's research interests, disciplinary background, etc. The following table only provides an example of possible steps in a student's candidacy process, the specific sequence to be determined by the committee.

Semester	Time	Step
1	Sept	Meeting with supervisor (or co-supervisors) to discuss evolving research interests (e.g., as a part of a fellowship application process), courses, and semester goals.
	Oct-Dec	Meetings as needed with supervisor to refine goals, interests, and possibly create an initial bibliography for the study of research and theory in the student's area of interest (e.g., for the development of an annotated bibliography, for use in doctoral seminars, graduate courses, etc.).
2	Jan-March	Meetings with supervisor to discuss evolving research interests and possible committee constellation.
	April - May	Meeting to finalize committee selection, discuss possible directions for and approaches to the CPs.
	June-July	Meetings with supervisor to discuss and draft the CP plan and questions as well as semester goals, courses, fellowships, etc. Meeting with the committee to approve the CP plan.
	July-Aug.	Student reads and works on CPs.
3	Sept-Dec.	Student continues to read and work on CPs.
4	January	Student submits complete draft of first CP to supervisor for feedback. Meetings with supervisor as needed to discuss CPs, etc.
	March	Student submits complete draft of second CP to Supervisor for feedback. Meetings with supervisor as needed to discuss CPs, etc. Student completes official registration for EDEC 701 (Candidacy Papers) after consulting with the Supervisor.
	June-July	Student submits revised CPs to Committee and schedules the scholarly oral presentation of the papers in the department, normally 4 weeks later.



Evaluation, Feedback, and Next Steps

In general, the evaluation of the candidacy status of the doctoral student is guided by the objectives of the candidacy process: the extent to which the doctoral student has situated his or her research interests in, and can critically engage with, ongoing theoretical, research, and methodological debates; is able to communicate effectively and articulate knowledge, reasoning, and research approaches in the field of study through written and oral work; and is prepared for pursuing the next steps toward his or her doctoral dissertation work.

The committee must evaluate the candidacy papers as one of the following, using the following criteria:

Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses questions adequately in comprehensive manner and with depth • Reviews a breadth of literature • Literature is presented as a synthesis, not a summary • Critically engages with the literature (e.g., provides a sense of implications for the student going forward) • Has demonstrated knowledge in the area
Conditional Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not fully meet the pass criteria. • Paper must be revised and re-submitted to the committee for approval.
Fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet the pass criteria • Papers require extensive revisions and must be re-written • A new defense must be scheduled

If a conditional pass is given, the student must resubmit the papers for evaluation to the committee to determine whether the papers should be awarded a pass or fail.

In addition, the committee should also provide the student with oral and written feedback, offering, for example, reflections, further questions, suggestions for next steps, and other responses to the student's work.

Procedures

At the end of the student's CP presentation and discussion, the committee should meet to discuss the student's written work and oral presentation, and to arrive at an assessment (pass, conditional pass, fail). The student is informed immediately of the assessment and provided any further feedback. The committee members sign the DISE Candidacy Paper Completion Form to record the evaluation (see end of this document).



After the defense, the following actions must be taken:

- The form must be submitted on myProgress (including in cases when a conditional pass is awarded).
- In cases when a student is awarded a conditional pass, the student must make the revisions and resubmit to the committee in a timely manner. At that point, the committee must determine whether the CPs will be evaluated as a pass or fail. The student must submit a new form, with signatures, on myProgress with the final evaluation.
- Once a determination of pass or fail has been made, the supervisor must enter a grade (Pass/Fail) for EDEC 701.

In the Case of a Fail: With its focus on candidacy as a student-led learning process and on scholarly dialogue, the DISE doctoral candidacy process is deliberately designed to facilitate student success. If, however, a student does not receive a passing grade, the student, as stipulated by the university comprehensive exams policy, will have **one opportunity** to resubmit the necessary parts of the written and/ or oral components of the candidacy process, within a timeframe agreed upon by the student and the committee (in consultation with the Graduate Program Director). For this purpose, the student will receive a written assessment from the Committee, which will explain current strengths as well as reasons why specific parts of the candidacy work (written and/ or oral) need to be revised and what issues need to be addressed.

Dissertation Proposal

The doctoral candidate next writes the dissertation proposal (see related document on DISE PhD website). When needed, the doctoral candidate will also apply for ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board prior to beginning any research involving human subjects.
(<http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/reb-i-ii-iii>).

How is the Dissertation Proposal different from the Candidacy Papers?

Unlike the candidacy papers, the dissertation proposal should be focused on the specific research project that the student will undertake. The candidacy papers form a foundation for the dissertation work and allow the student to explore a broader selection of literature, theories, methods, and methodologies than those discussed in the proposal. Although the student may use ideas developed within the candidacy papers for the proposal, the proposal should differ in structure and content.

Other Relevant Policies and Offices

University-wide policy on PhD comprehensive exams

http://www.mcgill.ca/study/2012-2013/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_guidelines_and_policies_phd_comprehensive_policy

Charter of Student Rights

Graduate Studies Reread Policy

Office for Students with Disabilities



Candidacy Paper Completion Form¹

Doctoral Student's Name: _____ Student #: _____

FINAL GRADE (please check one)	PASS <input type="checkbox"/>	CONDITIONAL PASS <input type="checkbox"/>	FAIL <input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses questions adequately in a comprehensive manner and with depth Reviews a breadth of literature Literature is presented as a synthesis, not a summary Critically engages with the literature (e.g., provides a sense of implications for the student going forward) Has demonstrated knowledge in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not fully meet the pass criteria Paper must be revised and re-submitted to the committee for approval <p><i>** If a conditional pass is given, the student must submit this form, with signatures, on myProgress. The form must then be re-submitted once a pass is awarded.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet the pass criteria Papers require extensive revisions and must be re-written A new defense must be scheduled

Feedback (attach additional pages as needed):

Name of Committee Members	Signature	Date Confirmed
Supervisor		
Co-supervisor (if applicable)		
Committee Member		
Committee Member (if no co-supervisor)		

Please upload to myProgress for approval by your Graduate Program Director.

¹ A fillable PDF version of this form is available on the DISE PhD website.
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