



Department of
Kinesiology and Physical Education

Département de
kinésiologie et d'éducation physique

PhD in Kinesiology Sciences
EDKP 701- Comprehensive Examination (0 credits).

General McGill University Comprehensive Exam Guidelines

Objectives and Content. The purpose of comprehensive examinations is to determine whether the student demonstrates the necessary research skills and academic achievements to continue in the Ph.D. program. Objectives may include assessing one or more of the following:

- knowledge of the discipline
- understanding of the proposed field of research
- ability to conduct independent and original research
- ability to present and defend material orally
- professional skills

The content of the comprehensive examination must be consistent with the stated objectives and should be appropriately circumscribed. Students must be given an indication of the range of material that may be covered in the examination and suggestions as to how to cover this material (e.g., via reading lists, courses, etc.).

(See link for more details: https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2018-2019/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_phd_comprehensives_policy.)

PhD in Kinesiology Sciences Comprehensive Exam Requirements

Pre-requisites. *Current Topics in Kinesiology Research*; EDKP 605 - *Research Methods* (or equivalent); EDPE 676 - *Intermediate Statistics* (or equivalent); EDKP 617 and 618 *Seminar*.

Timeline. The comprehensive examination must be completed by the end of the second year (before the start of PhD4). Any modifications to this timeline will require a formal request to KPE's Graduate Program Advisory Committee. A strong justification for this modification will need to be submitted by the student and supervisor with letters/emails of support from the student's supervisory committee.

Format. A written and oral examination.

Comprehensive Exam Committee. The comprehensive examination committee will consist of three to five members, including three experts who submitted questions (see Content section below). A chair of the comprehensive examination committee will be nominated (which can be the supervisor). The comprehensive examination committee and the student will decide on the themes, the length of the comprehensive exam, the length of the written answers, the dates at which the questions are sent to the students, the due dates of the written answers and oral examination, and the criteria that determines a pass versus a fail for both the written and oral examinations. The comprehensive exam committee will also clarify whether the written answers are evaluated by all members or only the members who provided the questions.

The chair of the comprehensive exam committee will be responsible to (a) inform the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) of the comprehensive examination start date and the oral examination date at least 2 months prior of the comprehensive exam start date, (b) gather the comprehensive examination questions from the experts and verify the quality, (c) work with the experts to modify their questions if necessary, (d) submit the questions and comprehensive examination process to the GPC for approval by KPE's Graduate Program Advisory Committee as least one (1) month prior to comprehensive exam start date.

After receiving the start date of a comprehensive examination, the GPC will (a) inform the Graduate Program Advisory Committee of an upcoming comprehensive exam, (b) schedule a Graduate Program Advisory Committee meeting within a month of the Comprehensive exam start date, and (c) send the comprehensive examination questions to the Graduate Program Advisory Committee. If an in-person meeting is impossible, the Graduate Program Advisory committee could meet virtually or provide comments to the GPD via email.

The Graduate Program Advisory Committee will review the comprehensive examination questions and process to ensure the examination is fair across students in the PhD in Kinesiology Sciences program. The Chair of the comprehensive exam committee will be responsible to address any questions raised by the Graduate Program Advisory Committee. The GPD will work with the Chair of the comprehensive exam committee to modify the comprehensive examination questions and/or process and approve (if required) any modifications on behalf of the Graduate Program Advisory Committee. The graduate program director or a representative will chair the oral examination.

Content and length.

1. The supervisory committee and the student will identify three themes. The themes may be interconnected or independent.
2. For each theme, an expert will be identified (which could be the supervisor, a member of the supervisory committee, and/or someone external to the supervisory committee).
3. The expert of a theme will submit one question (with sub-questions if necessary) to the chair of the comprehensive exam committee (see Comprehensive Exam Committee section below). The question should aim to develop the student's ability to think critically, independently and test the student's general knowledge of the discipline as well as their specific understanding of dimensions within the proposed field of research.
 - a. The supervisor, comprehensive exam committee, and student can decide the extent to which the student is actively engaged in constructing the question for each theme.
 - b. The expert could provide a reading list if deemed necessary.
4. The student will write an essay style answer to each of the questions. The length of the essay should be no less than 10 pages and no more than 30 pages. The specific length will need to be determined by the comprehensive exam committee and the student.
5. The student will have a minimum of 15 and maximum of 60 business days to write their answers for all three themes (i.e., an average of 5 to 20 business days per theme).
6. The length of time spent on all three written essays should be between two (2) and three (3) months. The length of time would include preparatory reading time (i.e., a reading list is provided) if the student spends less than 60 business days on the written essays.

7. In the oral component of the comprehensive exam, the student will respond to questions from the experts. The first round of questions will focus on the student's written response to each of the exam questions. The second round of questions will be open to the committee's discretion. The date of the oral examination should be set prior to the start of the comprehensive examination and should be no more than one (1) month after the submission of the last written essay. The oral examination will only be held if the committee agrees the student has passed the written component.
8. At no point during the comprehensive exam, including the period between the written and oral components, the student and the committee members/chair may consult (written or verbally) about the themes/questions of the comprehensive exam, including providing feedback/questions.

Evaluation. The written and oral component of the comprehensive examination is evaluated as a pass/fail. The student must demonstrate their grasp of the basic knowledge of each of the three themes, and their ability to critically assess, synthesize, critique and integrate this knowledge. The student is also evaluated on the general quality of the written component and answers during the oral component. The criteria and subsequent process for determining a pass or fail of the written and oral examinations must be determined *a priori* and be written into the comprehensive examination process (see below for a recommended wording of the evaluation criteria).

The experts will first evaluate the written examination. If the written examination receives a pass, the student will proceed to the oral examination. In all cases, the primary goal of the comprehensive examination committee is to ensure that the student has the ability to conduct independent and original research necessary to obtain a doctoral degree.

If the comprehensive examination receives a pass for both the written and oral components, the student and committee members must complete and sign the Comprehensive Examination form. The student submits the signed form the KPE Graduate Program Office.

Failures (as per McGill University policy). In the event that the student is judged to have failed the comprehensive examination, units must allow, without prejudice, one repeat of the comprehensive examination (in whole or in part) within a minimum of four (4) months and a maximum of six (6) months. After a first failure, a grade of HH (which designates "continuing") will be recorded on the student's transcript. The student must be informed in writing by the department that he/she has failed the comprehensive and must be informed of conditions relating to a repeat of the examination, including the nature of the re-examination and committee membership, as well as the deadline for retaking the exam. Units have the right to specify further requirements in the event of failure, e.g., requiring students to take an additional course or courses in areas where they have shown weakness on the comprehensive.

If the student does not repeat the exam by the deadline specified by the unit, the HH will be converted into F and the student will be withdrawn from the PhD program. In the event that the repeat comprehensive examination receives a fail, the student will receive a grade of F and will be withdrawn from the PhD Program.

Recommended comprehensive examination evaluation criteria wording.

The candidate will proceed to the oral component of the comprehensive exam if all members of the committee deemed the written portion a pass.

A committee member who deems the written component of the comprehensive exam to be a fail must provide a written justification to [chair of the comprehensive examination committee]. If a committee member deems the written component of the exam to be a fail, [Chair of the comprehensive examination committee] will consult with the committee member who provided the failing grade. If, through this discussion, the committee member and [chair of the comprehensive examination committee] believe that the deficiencies in the written component of the exam could be adequately addressed by the candidate in the oral component of the exam, the candidate may be allowed to proceed to the oral exam. If the committee members does not believe the deficiencies can be addressed in the oral component, all other committee members will be asked to read and evaluate (provide a pass/fail grade) the question. Should no other committee have the expertise to evaluate the questions, an external expert can be sought to evaluate the question.

The written component of the comprehensive exam would be considered a fail if more than one of the committee members deems the written component of the comprehensive exam to be a fail. In this case, [chair of the comprehensive examination committee] will meet with the candidate to relay the assessment (fail) and feedback from the committee members and discuss and apply the McGill University Ph.D. Comprehensives Policy (https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2019-2020/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_phd_comprehensives_policy). The same evaluation procedure will be used for the oral component of the comprehensive examination. In the event that the student is judged to have failed the oral or written component of the comprehensive exam, then they have a right to repeat it once, without prejudice, within a minimum of four months and a maximum of six months.