

**Department of Psychology
McGill University**

**PSYC 701 Special Comprehensive (Candidacy Examination)
Experimental Program**

The Special Comprehensive Examination takes the form of a candidacy examination; that is, it is an oral examination based on a document that includes a literature review and a description of proposed research. The candidacy examination is a test of the student's ability to recognize, evaluate, plan, and perform original scholarship and to demonstrate that they are a suitable candidate for a PhD degree.

The written thesis proposal provides a concise review of the background literature, and must discuss the proposed problem, its importance, and the methods to be applied to its examination (i.e., the proposed studies). The proposal should be around 20-30 pages long. **The proposal should also contain a timetable.** The proposal must be well thought-out, carefully written and edited, and finished with appropriate references and illustrations. The proposal can include already finalized (and potentially submitted/published) manuscripts. These manuscripts should be placed into the appendix of the proposal. The student must present a draft proposal to their thesis supervisor in a timely fashion and take into account the supervisor's comments and required revisions before the written thesis proposal is ready to be submitted.

Before the Oral Examination

1. The supervisor and student will create the candidacy examination committee. It consists of the supervisor, two members of the student's advisory committee, and one external member. Serving as a member of the student's advisory committee on the student's candidacy examination committee does not preclude the advisory committee member to later on also serve on the student's oral defense committee. The external member can be a faculty member from another department at McGill or from another university. Only in exceptional circumstances can the external member be a faculty member from the department. If the external member is not located in Montreal, they can participate in the committee through skype or video-link. One of the advisory committee members will chair the oral examination (the supervisor cannot chair the oral examination).

2. The student will next submit a completed Candidacy Examination Schedule Form and one copy of their manuscript to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The form and copy of the manuscript must be received at least two weeks prior to the scheduled oral examination. The Graduate Program Director will examine the proposal and the composition of the examination committee to ensure that both meet graduate program requirements. If all is in order, you will distribute the manuscript to the examination committee. If problems are identified, the

Graduate Program Director will inform the student and supervisor. If necessary, the oral examination will be postponed until outstanding issues are resolved.

Format of the Oral Examination

1. The oral examination begins with a formal 20-minute presentation by the student that reviews the document including the literature review and the proposed line of research.
2. The student will then be asked to respond to questions from the examination committee, including the supervisor. The student will be queried on topics related to the proposed area of research. The goal of the examination committee is to determine that the student has sufficient understanding of the background information, rationale, and methodological issues to perform and analyze their research topic. This section of the oral examination will typically last 1-2 hours. The examination chair will act to ensure that the oral examination is conducted in an orderly and constructive manner. The oral presentation and examination are not open to the public.
3. At the end of the oral examination, the examination chair will ask the student to leave, and the examination committee will meet in closed session. The examination committee will deliberate and make a judgment of “pass” or “fail”. Comments and judgment will be recorded on the Candidacy Evaluation Form and results will be communicated to the student by the examination chair. The supervisor may remain for the closed session but will act only as a resource allowing the committee to make an informed decision; they will not cast a vote to determine whether the performance is a “pass” or a “fail”.
4. If the judgment is “fail”, the student will be required to re-take the candidacy examination within four months. For a second examination, the composition of the examination committee must remain the same but needs to contain an additional faculty member from the department.
5. A second “fail” will require withdrawal from the PhD program.

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Candidacy Examination Schedule Form, Experimental Program

Please review the candidacy exam guidelines before completing this form.

Student Name:

Student's Supervisor(s):

Working Title of Thesis:

Date of Exam:	
Time of Exam:	
Room/Building:	

	Name	Signature*
Advisory Committee Member 1 (Chair of Examination)		
Advisory Committee Member 2		
External Member		

*Scanned signatures are acceptable.

Please forward this form Nina Pinzarrone, Psychology.grad@mcgill.ca.

Internal Use Only:

Approved by the Graduate Program Director:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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Candidacy Evaluation Form, Experimental Program

Please circle one: Pass Fail

Signatures:

Advisory Committee Member 1 (Chair):

Advisory Committee Member 2:

External Member:

Comments in the case of a "fail":

Please forward this form to Nina Pinzarrone – psychology.grad@mcgill.ca