



Werklund School of Education Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

The University of Calgary [Doctoral Candidacy Regulations](#) (“the Regulations”) govern the conduct of admission to candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy under the *Regulations*.

A. Statement of Purpose

Admission into Candidacy in the Werklund School of Education Graduate Programs: 1) requires that students have abilities to conceptualize, interpret, critique and synthesize comprehensive, substantive knowledge that is relevant to the discipline and practice of educational research and/or educational psychology; and 2) ensures that students have a well-developed plan for their dissertation research, a sound proposal with a well-developed research question and potential for the ability to pursue and complete original independent research at the doctoral level.

In compliance with the Faculty of Graduate Studies Candidacy Regulations, the requirements for Admission to Candidacy at the Werklund School of Education is a 4 stage process:

- 1) Completion of all course requirements as identified in the calendar;
- 2) Field of study (FoS) written candidacy examination;
- 3) A research proposal approved by the Supervisory Committee (recognizing changes may be made after successful completion of exams prior to submission for ethics approval);
- 4) An oral examination of the research proposal;

The entire Candidacy process must be completed within 28 months of the student’s first registration. Students may complete their course work within 12 – 18 months, and may proceed to Candidacy within 20 – 24 months. The purpose of the candidacy process, including oral examination of the research proposal, is to ascertain that the student is ready and able to carry out doctoral level research independently, with the support of the Supervisory Committee.

All doctoral students in a Werklund School of Education Graduate Program must successfully complete the following components:

STAGE 1: Completion of All Course Requirements

All required courses as identified in the calendar must be successfully completed.

- Exceptions include explicit post-Candidacy course requirements as stated by the Program and approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Current exceptions:
 - EdD Dissertation Seminar I and II
 - Internships which are a requirement of the Educational Psychology PhD program

The Supervisor will ascertain that the student has successfully completed all required course work. The Supervisor will confirm the student’s course completion status with the appropriate Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) prior to planning the next three stages of Candidacy.



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STAGE 2: Field of Study (FoS) Written Examination

The student submits a written component (either a FoS Candidacy Portfolio or a FoS Candidacy Synthesis Paper) to the Supervisory Committee members as the basis for the examination of the student's knowledge of the FoS underlying his/her research topic. The FoS written component can be submitted to the Supervisory Committee members concurrently with the research proposal.

Scheduling of FoS Written Examination

- The FoS Candidacy Portfolio or FoS Candidacy Synthesis paper must be submitted to the Supervisory Committee members for examination within 3 months of the completion of the last required course prior to Candidacy.
- The Supervisory Committee must render a decision and fill out the FoS examination report form within 2 weeks of the receipt of the FoS written component.

Composition of FoS Written Examination Committee

The FoS written examination committee consists of the Supervisory committee members.

Format of FoS Written Examination

Unless specified by the Program, the student in consultation with the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee, may choose the type of written product he/she will submit to the Supervisory Committee for examination, in accordance with the **two options for FoS written examination** specified below.

- the choice must be approved by the Graduate Program Director (GPD)
- both options for FoS written examination follow the requirement of the Faculty of Graduate Studies for a pedagogically sound process, whereby the production of the written work is a coherent learning experience that is scaffolded through such factors as, for example, course-linked supports, provision of reading lists, and regular consultation with the Supervisor *prior* to writing the paper.
- The intent is that student prepares the written candidacy component as a form of "take home" examination, with limited guidance from the Supervisory Committee.

Process/Evaluation of FoS Written Examination

What is examined:

The FoS written examination product may be constructed in accordance with option A **or** option B.

Option A: FoS Candidacy Portfolio

The **FoS Candidacy Portfolio** consists of 4 papers written in the pertinent specialization areas, accompanied by a **Reflection Paper** that explains how these papers map to the relevant Field of Study, and leads to the student's presentation of their understanding of the Field of Study.

Option A: FoS Candidacy Portfolio is the required option for the EdD Programs

(See: [FoS Examination Criteria, Option A: Candidacy Portfolio](#))



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Option B: FoS Candidacy Synthesis Paper

The **Synthesis Paper** is based on a critical literature review in the relevant Field of Study that underlies the student's research topic. Beyond the function of the synthesis paper in this examination, the Synthesis Paper may be subsequently submitted for publication, and/or be included in the thesis (see, for example, manuscript thesis regulation).

(See: [FoS Examination Criteria, Option B: Candidacy Synthesis Paper](#))

Assessment:

- The assessment of the FoS Written Examination is on a Pass/Fail basis
- In order for the student to pass, there must be a unanimous agreement among the examiners (FoS examination report)

Appeal of Failed FoS Written Examination

- In the case of a lack of unanimity, remedial action will be specified by the supervisory committee, and submitted to the GPD
- The GPD will review the supervisory committee's report within 7 calendar days, and either uphold or overturn the decision of the committee according to the established criteria (See: FoS Examination)
- Remedial action: the supervisory committee may suggest further reading in specific areas, will provide an action plan and set a resubmission date, in consultation with the GPD. The time for resubmission shall not exceed 1 month.
- If the GPD upholds the Fail and Resubmit decision of the committee, the student can appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see the Graduate Calendar, section [N. Appeals](#) – N.2 *Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings*).

STAGE 3: Written Research Proposal, Approved by Supervisory Committee

The written research proposal must contain the following components: overview of the research design; review of the literature; discussion of methodology and methods; and an executive summary of the proposed research project, all of which are written in current APA style. The appropriate length of the research proposal is determined by the supervisory committee in close consultation with the student, and is influenced by such factors as the theoretical and conceptual framework, the critical review of literature, the research problem and questions, the selection of research methodology, the data collection and analysis methods, and the overall research plan.

The Supervisory Committee provides ongoing feedback and guidance to the student, until the research proposal draft reaches the point at which the Supervisory Committee agrees that it constitutes a workable doctoral research plan. (See: [Research Proposal Criteria](#)). It is recognized that changes may be made to the research proposal after the student's successful completion of the oral exam and prior to submission for ethics approval.

Once the supervisory committee unanimously agrees that the research proposal is approved, the student can proceed to the oral examination. To indicate approval of the research proposal, each



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member of the Supervisory Committee including the Supervisor must sign the Research Proposal Approval form. Approval of the research proposal triggers the administrative process to begin the Notice of Oral.

STAGE 4: Oral Examination of the Research Proposal

The approval of the research proposal by the Supervisory Committee triggers the fourth component of the Candidacy process - the oral examination. The purpose of the oral examination is the final stage of ascertaining that the student is ready and able to carry out doctoral level research independently, with the support of the Supervisory Committee.

Thesis Proposal

- The student's written research proposal must be approved by all members of the Supervisory Committee (recognizing changes may be made after successful completion of exams prior to submission for ethics approval).
- The student's ability to orally defend the research proposal is what is examined at the oral examination. The student must demonstrate his/her readiness to undertake the proposed research project by their oral defense of the proposal and response to questions about the research plan.

Scheduling of Oral Examination

The approved research proposal is required to initiate the Notice of Oral preparation.

The Supervisor is responsible for initiating all arrangements related to the scheduling of the examination. The time requirement for submission of the Notice of Oral to the GPA is a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the date of the examination.

The examining committee members must receive the approved research proposal during the 4 weeks when the Notice of Oral is prepared, but no later than 2 weeks prior to the examination date.

Composition of Oral Examination Committee

The Examination Committee is comprised of members of the Supervisory Committee plus two additional examiners. One of the two additional members will normally be an Internal/External, who shall be from a different specialization area (but may also be from another WSE program or from another faculty), and the other member may be either from within the Student's Specialization area or from outside of it.

Format of Oral Examination

The oral examination is conducted by the Neutral Chair. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting. He/she must not have a direct relationship with the student or have read the student's FoS written work or the research proposal. The Neutral Chair presides over the candidacy examination to ensure a fair and just process is followed. The Neutral Chair takes notes during the exam of the process and questions asked by the examiners. The Neutral Chair is responsible for ensuring the final paperwork is signed off and given to the Graduate Programs Office within 24 hours of the exam.



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The duration of the examination is up to 2 hours. *This does not include the student presentation, or the post-examination straw vote and discussion.* As mentioned, the student may elect to do a brief opening summary of up to 15 minutes to contextualize their research proposal. After the student's opening summary, the Neutral Chair invites the Examiners to ask their questions.

Examiners are encouraged to ask clear and succinct questions. The student will be given reasonable time to answer and should feel free to ask for questions to be repeated or rephrased. If a student is not able to answer, the Neutral Chair should direct the examiners to move to the next question rather than pressing, leading or interrogating the student. The most external examiner is the first member to question the student and the Supervisor is the last. The order typically follows the reverse order of the Examiners' listing in the Notice of Oral. When all examiners have had at least one opportunity to question the student, the committee has completed what is called the first round of questions. Normally, there will be two formal rounds of questions. There may be a short break after the first round of questions, in which case, examiners and the student are required to refrain from discussion of the examination until the examination reconvenes.

After two formal rounds of questions, the Neutral Chair invites any Examiner who has additional questions to proceed. At this point in the Examination, there is no formal order and any Examiner may ask questions. When the Neutral Chair observes that the Examiners have no further questions, he or she asks the student to leave the room so that the next phase of the examination—the Examiners' deliberations—can take place. At this time, any other people present for the exam are asked to leave the room as well.

Process/Evaluation of Oral Examination

The oral defense must demonstrate the student's readiness to undertake the proposed research project.

In the deliberation process of the examination, all members including the student's supervisor (except the neutral chair) are participating voting members. In this vote, examiners are considering the oral presentation and responses to questions. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each member must identify, by secret ballot, which recommendation he/she favors (pass or fail for the oral component of the exam). This vote allows the committee an opening for full discussion of the student's performance. Following this discussion, each committee member will then vote again. Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the student will pass. Should the outcome include two or more negative votes, the committee's recommendation will be "fail". This result will immediately be provided to the student by the supervisor. After the final vote each examiner must record an evaluation of pass or fail on the Report of Oral Examination Form (Appendix form 8: Oral Examination assessment form), and be delivered to Graduate Programs office by the Neutral Chair.

Appeal of Failed Oral Examination

In the case of a failed Oral Examination, the student has the opportunity to do one retake of the examination no sooner than 2 months and no later than 6 months after the failed attempt.



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The Neutral Chair must inform the appropriate GPD immediately of a failed Oral Examination. The GPDs of WSE follow an FGS-approved process to determine the final outcome of the failed examination:

Examination committee members must submit their reports of the failed oral examination to the GPD within 5 calendar days of the oral examination. The GPD will render a decision within 7 calendar days.

If the GPD upholds the Fail decision of the examination committee, the student can appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see the *Graduate Calendar*, section [N. Appeals](#) – *N.2 Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings*).

Extension to Candidacy Requirement Deadline

Students who will not complete their candidacy requirements by the end of their 28th month in the program must have an extension request approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. When requesting an extension, the student and supervisor should discuss approximate dates for the written/oral exams and plan the extension request around these dates. Once a date has been decided, the extension request form (http://grad.ucalgary.ca/sites/grad.ucalgary.ca/files/r_extension_request.pdf) should be completed with an explanation of the reasons for the delay. The form needs to be completed and signed by the supervisor and Graduate Program Director, and submitted by the Graduate Programs Office to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for Approval.