

Overview – Oral Candidacy Examination

The oral candidacy examination may serve several purposes. In part, it tests the candidate's readiness for advanced research in the more specialized area(s) of his/her field. It may also be comprehensive. Successful passage indicates that, in the judgment of the committee, the candidate has an adequate knowledge of the basic literature, problems, and methods of his/her field to proceed to a dissertation. If the proposal defense is part of the oral exam, it should be a defense of a proposal and not of a completed dissertation.

Prior to the examination, committees should review departmental regulations for the conduct of the exam, the process of the exam, and voting procedures. Before the exam begins, they should inform the candidate of the process of the exam. After completion of the examination, the candidate should be asked to leave the room. Discussion of the candidate's performance should then commence, with the committee ultimately voting on whether that performance merits a passing or failing grade. On a board of three, two votes are required to pass. On a board of four, three votes are required to pass. If a department chooses to have five members, four votes are required to pass. A written report of the results of the voting is sent immediately to the Graduate School by a member of the committee, normally the adviser.

In case of failure, the department chair, on the recommendation of a majority of the examiners, may authorize a retake of the examination if this is permitted by departmental regulations. An authorization for retake must be approved by the Graduate School. A second failure results in forfeiture of degree eligibility and is recorded on the candidate's permanent record.

A candidate has the right to appeal the result of the exam to the Dean of the Graduate School *on procedural grounds only, not on its substance or on his/her performance*. If a retake is granted, an outside monitor appointed by the Graduate School must be present.