

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Overview

The Comprehensive Exam is an essential element of the PhD degree requirements at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto. All PhD students are required to complete a two-part comprehensive examination normally before their second summer of study. The specific nature and scope of the two parts of the exam are to be determined in consultation with the student's supervisor.

The Comprehensive Exam is a major milestone for PhD students in obtaining their doctoral degree. Students who do not complete the Comprehensive Exam in a timely fashion will not be able to begin work on their Thesis Proposal, and as a result, may not receive their candidacy by the end of the third year. The faculty will send a request for termination of registration to the SGS for students who cannot achieve their candidacy by the end of the third year.

Purpose

The Goals and Principles of the Comprehensive examination are as follows:

- a PhD comprehensive exam is understood to be an examination of broad expertise in an area, not specific background for a research agenda.
- a PhD comprehensive exam implies a responsibility for exposure to a broad spectrum of materials in an area, to facilitate both the generality of research conducted in that area and preparation for future teaching.
- A PhD comprehensive exam is one way for students to demonstrate their expertise in a particular area, as they seek academic and non-academic careers.

Enrollment

Students must submit the appropriate booking form for each Comprehensive Exam to the attention of the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca.

Students must indicate on both Comprehensive exam booking forms that they understand the general instructions provided about the upcoming exam, including being responsible for knowing and understanding SGS academic integrity guidelines.

Students must successfully pass Comprehensive Exam 1 before requesting to take Comprehensive Exam 2.

Comprehensive Exam 1 Requirements

Comprehensive Exam 1 is to achieve *breadth* in the chosen field of study so that the student can teach and conduct research in a larger chosen field within the design disciplines. It will involve preparing an annotated bibliography in consultation with the supervisor before the summer of the student's first year of study, preparing for the exam over the course of the summer and writing the exam at the end of the summer. The first part of the exam will take place over three hours and will be composed of a written response to three questions. Each response should be no more than 1000 words.

- Students must submit their request to take Comprehensive exam 1 by submitting the booking form to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca in **May or at least 3 months** before the date of the exam.
- The annotated bibliography can be submitted together with the 'Comprehensive Examination 1: Booking Form' **or** at a minimum of **3 weeks** before the exam. It is strongly recommended to submit the bibliography when booking the exam.
- The written portion of this Comprehensive exam must be written no later than the end of summer (August) of the first year of study.

Annotated Bibliography for Comprehensive Exam 1

- The annotated bibliography is developed by the student in consultation with the Supervisor.

- A copy must be submitted to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca, a minimum of **3 weeks** before the exam. However, it is **strongly** recommended to submit the bibliography when booking the exam.

Responsibility of Supervisor for Comprehensive Exam 1

- The Supervisor will support the student to determine the specific nature and scope of both Comprehensive exams.
- The Supervisor will work with the student to ensure that the exam is booked and completed in the required time frame.
- Working with the student, the Supervisor will assign a second assessor for the Comprehensive exams as per the requirements listed below.
- The Supervisor will support the student in the development of their annotated bibliography.
- The Supervisor will provide the Graduate Administrator with the list of exam questions at least 1 week before the exam date using the 'PhD Comprehensive Examination Questions' form. These questions will be derived from the list of general questions made available to the student during the prior winter term by the PhD Director. The PhD Director will consult with all PhD supervisors for the preparation of the general questions.
- The Supervisor will work with the second assessor to assess the written exam and provide the assessment/result to the Graduate Administrator no later than **2 weeks** after the exam using the 'Assessment of Comprehensive Exam' Form.

Second Assessor Assignment and Responsibility for Comprehensive Exam 1

- The Supervisor will assign a second assessor in consultation with the student.
- Information on the Second Assessor must be listed in the booking form for Comprehensive Exam 1.
- The second assessor must be part of the SGS Graduate Faculty and hold an appropriate and active [Graduate Faculty Membership](#).
- The second assessor must be available to serve as part of the Exam Committee for Comprehensive Exam 2.
- The second assessor may be assigned as part of the student's Supervisory Committee.
- The second assessor must work with the Supervisor to assess the written exam.

Exam Procedures and Instructions for Students for Comprehensive Exam 1

- The student must submit required forms and supporting documents according to the enrolment requirements stated in the Enrolment section above.
- Exam questions will be sent to you at 9 am on the date of the exam. If you do not receive your exam by 9:15 am, please contact the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca immediately.
- Be sure to send a quick reply to the Graduate Administrator to confirm receipt of the questions, and indicate in your email that you read and understand these instructions, as well as the [University's policy on Academic Integrity](#) and the [Code of Behavior on Academic Matters](#).
- Any medical, mental health, and/or accessibility issues must be discussed with the Graduate Administrator and/or the appropriate University Office (e.g. the Accessibility Office) at least six weeks prior to the exam. Any accommodations suggested by those offices must be in place before the exam begins.
- When your exam is complete, email the answers to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca and CC the PhD Director.

- **Answers must be submitted in Word format no later than 5:00 PM EST** on the date that it is due. Answers will not be accepted after this time. Your exam will be marked as a fail in these cases.
- You are required to answer **THREE (3) QUESTIONS (ONE QUESTION FROM EACH OF PARTS A, B & C)**. Each answer should be no more than **1000 words** (12-point Times New Roman font, standard margins, and double-spaced) in length.
- If you need clarification or have questions that arise once the exam has been sent to you, direct your questions to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca with a CC to your Supervisor and the PhD Director.
- Given the nature of the exam, there is not an expectation that students will quote directly from sources but will rather be able to offer general assessments of the arguments, approaches, etc. from each text. As such, a standard citation style is not necessary. However, when referring to a source, it is expected that students will integrate authors and titles into the body of their text.
- The exam is closed book (i.e. notes are not permitted).
- No one other than you may read, edit, or comment on your exam prior to submission.
- If, for any reason, you feel you cannot complete the exam on time, do not quit writing and please inform the Graduate Administrator. You must turn in as much writing as you possibly can. If you do not turn in any writing or you do not notify the Graduate Administrator of problems at the time they occur, the exam will be marked as a fail.

Note – Comprehensive exam 1 is a three-hour writing session that takes place on-site at the Daniels Faculty. Due to COVID, these exams have been pivoted to be completed remotely. Once in-person activities are resumed, all Comprehensive exams will be held on-site, and exam questions will only be released at the time of the exam.

Assessment of Comprehensive Exam 1

- The Supervisor will work with the second assessor to assess the written exam.
- The Supervisor will complete the 'Assessment of Comprehensive Exam 1' form and ensure that the assessment/result of the exam is sent to the Graduate Office within 2 weeks from the date of the exam.
- The exam will be recorded as a DEX (departmental exam) committee meeting on ACORN with a result of Satisfactory (Pass), Unsatisfactory (Fail).
- Once the result is noted on ACORN, the student will be notified by the Graduate Administrator.
- Students must pass comprehensive examination 1 before requesting to take comprehensive exam 2.
- In the event of a failing grade, a second attempt of the comprehensive examinations must be attempted again within six months and will only be allowed on the recommendation of the student's supervisor.
- If the student fails the exam the second time, current rules and regulations apply, including the student's right to appeal to the Faculty's Standing Committee overseeing appeals and the department's right to recommend to SGS that the student no longer be eligible to continue in the PhD program.

Comprehensive Exam 2 Requirements

Comprehensive Exam 2 is to be completed during the second semester of the second year of study and is to achieve **depth** in a sub-field, within the faculty or beyond, so that the student can master the context for the advanced research that they plan to undertake for their thesis. This exam may be administered by a faculty member other than the supervisor, to be determined by the student in consultation with their supervisor. This second part can take one of two formats:

1. a second annotated bibliography to achieve depth in a sub-section of the chosen field of study.

-OR-

2. a course syllabus with readings and outlines of lectures, and themes for tutorial discussion.

An oral examination will follow the completion of the second part of the exam. The oral examination.

- Students must submit their request to take Comprehensive exam 2 to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca **in January or at least 3 months** before the date of the exam.
- The annotated bibliography or course syllabus can be submitted together with the 'Comprehensive exam 2 – Booking Form' **or** at a minimum of **2 weeks** before the exam.
- The 90-minute Oral Exam must be completed by the end of the Winter semester (April) of the second year of study.

Option 1: Annotated Bibliography for Comprehensive Exam 2

If a student chooses to submit an annotated bibliography, a copy must be submitted to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca, **a minimum of 2 weeks** before the exam. However, it is recommended to submit the bibliography when booking the exam.

Option 2: Course Syllabus for Comprehensive Exam 2

If a student chooses to develop a course syllabus, it must include readings and outlines of lectures and themes for tutorial discussion, a copy must be submitted to the Graduate Administrator at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca, **a minimum of 2 weeks** before the exam.

Responsibility of Supervisor for Comprehensive Exam 2

- The Supervisor will support the student to determine the specific nature and scope of the Comprehensive Exam 2.
- Working with the student, the Supervisor will ensure the availability of the examination committee before a request for the exam is submitted to the Graduate Administrator.
- The Supervisor will guide the student on picking their format for the comprehensive exam 2 and support the student with the development of the course syllabus **or** annotated bibliography.
- Upon the completion of the exam, the Supervisor must submit a written report on the proceedings, questions, topics, and outcome of the examination to the Graduate Administrator using the 'Comprehensive Examination 2 – Summary and Exam Outcome' form with a clear indication of the result of the exam. Any comments should be linked to individual exam committee members' names. The Supervisor is also responsible for informing the student of the result at the end of the exam.

Second Assessor Responsibilities for Comprehensive Exam 2

- The second assessor must be available to serve as part of the Exam Committee for Comprehensive Exam 2.
- The second assessor must follow the expectations of the exam committee as listed below.

**Please refer to the second assessor section of comprehensive exam 1 for more information on the assignment of the second assessor.*

Exam Committee for Comprehensive Exam 2

The exam committee will:

- consist of the Supervisor, Second Assessor and Program Director.
- review the content submitted by the student for Comprehensive Exam 2 (i.e. annotated bibliography or course syllabus) in advance of the 90-minute oral presentation/departmental exam and prepare questions to be asked at the exam.
- judge whether the answers offered by the student during the round of discussion appear to adequately meet individual expectations.

- assess the student's annotated bibliography or course syllabus **and** oral exam, assigning a pass or fail grade depending on the overall performance of the student.

Exam Procedures and Instructions for Students for Comprehensive Exam 2

- Students must submit required forms and supporting documents according to the enrolment requirements stated in the Enrolment section above. **Students must confirm the availability of their exam committee for the date of their exam before submitting the booking form.**
- Students must submit the annotated bibliography or course syllabus no later than 2 weeks before the exam via email to the Graduate Administrator. A copy will then be forwarded by the Graduate Administrator to the Exam Committee for review.
- The Graduate Administrator will send official notice of the exam to the student and Committee.
- The students will continue to consult with their Supervisor to prepare for the exam.
- Any medical, mental health, and/or accessibility issues must be discussed with the Graduate Administrator and/or the appropriate University Office (e.g. Accessibility Office) at least six weeks prior to the exam. Any accommodations suggested by those offices must be in place before the exam begins.
- At the time of the examination:
 - The Supervisor will review the candidate's background and receive/make note of feedback regarding the submitted documents (i.e. course syllabus/annotated bibliography) with the exam committee members prior to introducing the candidate to the committee.
 - The student will then be invited to give a 30-minute oral presentation in front of the Exam Committee followed by 60 minutes of questions and discussion.
 - The Supervisor will then oversee a round of questioning by committee members and will keep a brief record of the main topics covered and asked. Judging whether the answers offered by the candidate appear to adequately meet a questioner's expectations is the role of the questioner and the examination committee. The supervisor goes last in the order of questioning.
 - Following the question period, the candidate will withdraw from the examination room and committee members will discuss the candidate's performance.
 - Once a decision is made, the student is invited back into the room where the Supervisor will verbally inform the student of the committee's decision and recommendation.
 - The Supervisor must submit a written report on the proceedings, question topics, and outcome of the examination to the Graduate Administrator at the end of the exam using the appropriate form.
- The exam has 2 possible outcomes: pass or fail. In the event of a failing grade, a second attempt of the comprehensive examinations must be attempted again within six months and will only be allowed on the recommendation of the student's supervisor.
- Once the grade is submitted and added to ACORN, you will be notified by the Graduate Administrator.

Note – Comprehensive exam 2 is a 90-minute oral exam that takes place on-site at the Daniels Faculty. Due to COVID, these exams have been pivoted to be completed remotely. Once in-person activities are resumed, all Comprehensive exams will be held on-site, and exam questions will only be released at the time of the exam.

Assessment of Comprehensive Exam 2

- The Exam Committee will assess the student's annotated bibliography or course syllabus and oral exam. A pass or fail grade will be assigned depending on the overall performance of the student.
- The Supervisor will inform the student of the result at the end of the exam.
- The Supervisor must complete the Comprehensive Exam 2: Summary and Exam Outcome form and submit it to the Graduate Administrator within 1 week from the exam date.

- The exam will be recorded as a DEX (departmental exam) committee meeting on ACORN with a result of Satisfactory (Pass), Unsatisfactory (Fail).
- Students must pass comprehensive examination 2 before permission to submit a Thesis Proposal will be granted.
- In the event of a failing grade, a second attempt of the comprehensive examinations must be attempted again within six months and will only be allowed on the recommendation of the student's supervisor.
- If the student fails the exam the second time, current rules and regulations apply, including the student's right to appeal to the Faculty's Standing Committee overseeing appeals and the department's right to recommend to SGS that the student no longer be eligible to continue in the PhD program.