

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 Markus Peterson 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 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.
- Any medical, mental health, and/or accessibility issues must be discussed with Markus Peterson and/or the PhD Program Director and 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Procedure for remote exams:

- Questions will be sent to you at the scheduled time on the date of your exam. If you do not receive your exam within 15 minutes past your scheduled time, please contact Markus Peterson at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca immediately.
- Be sure to send a quick reply 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](#).
- You will have **four** hours in which to complete the examination. If, for any reason, you feel you cannot complete the exam on time, do not quit writing and please inform Markus Peterson. You must turn in as much writing as you possibly can. If you do not turn in any writing and you do not notify Markus Peterson of problems at the time they occur, the exam will be marked as a fail.
- **Answers must be submitted in Word format no later than the date/time it is due.** Answers will not be accepted after this time. Your exam will be marked as a fail in these cases.
- When your exam is complete, email the answers to Markus Peterson at researchstream@daniels.utoronto.ca and CC the PhD Program Director.

Procedure for in-person exams:

- Students must book a room at the Daniels Faculty and include this information on the exam booking form.
- Questions will only be released at the time of the exam.
- You will have three hours in which to complete the examination.
- When your exam is complete, you must hand over your written answers to Markus Peterson.

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.
- 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.