



**Centre for Military Security and Strategic Studies (CMSS) Graduate Program
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. Candidacy Regulations

Admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree is a judgment by the faculty members in the graduate program that the student is prepared to successfully complete the requirements of the doctoral degree program. Subject to any extension allowances, doctoral students must complete all candidacy requirements within 20 months of their first registration.

B. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the candidacy requirements is to demonstrate the student’s: (i) basic familiarity with the most important literature in the Fields of Study which are Strategic and Security Studies, and the student’s Dissertation Field; (ii) understanding of the major debates within Strategic and Security Studies and their Dissertation Field; (iii) ability to read critically; (iv) familiarity with a range of approaches and methodologies within their Fields of Study; (v) ability to independently and effectively express arguments in written and oral form; (vi) preparation to conduct high quality research.

C. All doctoral students in the CMSS Graduate Program must successfully complete the following components:

1. Required Course Work as stated in the CMSS [Graduate Calendar](#) entry
2. Field of Study (FoS) Written Examinations
3. Field of Study (FoS) Oral Examination
4. Submission of Written Thesis Proposal
5. Thesis Proposal Meeting

Recommended Candidacy Component Timing:

PHASE	COMPONENT	COMPONENT START	COMPONENT COMPLETION	# MONTHS FROM PROGRAM START
1	Course Work	Year I: September	Year I: April or August	8 to 12 months
2	FoS Written Examinations	Year II: Fall or Winter	Year II: Fall or Winter	15 to 19 months
3	FoS Oral Examination	Year II: Fall or Winter	Year II: Fall or Winter	16 to 19 months
4	Thesis Proposal and Meeting	Year II: Fall or Winter	Year II: Winter or Spring	20 months

The Centre for Military Security and Strategic Studies strongly recommends that doctoral students complete all candidacy requirements within 20 months and all degree requirements within five years. The Faculty of Graduate Studies permits 28 months and six years, respectively.

Supervision:

Supervisor

All students will be appointed an Interim Supervisor when their program begins. Students must select a Permanent Supervisor no later than four months after the start of their program.

Supervisory Committee

Within the first eight months of entry into the program the student, in consultation with their Supervisor, will form a Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee will consist of three faculty members, normally faculty who are conversant with the student's Fields of Study.

Field of Study Examination Committee

The student's Field of Study Examination Committee is formed at the time that the NFOS exam set up is requested, usually within 15 to 19 months from the beginning of the student's program. The FoS Examination Committee evaluates the FoS Written Examinations and FoS Oral Examination. The FOS Examining Committee will consist of the student's Supervisory Committee and two other faculty members, both of whom are normally CMSS fellows.

1. COURSE WORK

Course Work Requirements:

See the CMSS program entry in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Timing of the Course Work:

Normally, students will complete all of their 15 units of course work during the first year of the program.

Choosing Courses:

Students should consult with their Supervisor when selecting courses, and must take all mandatory courses.

Successful Completion of the Course Work Component:

Please see the *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar* ([Academic Regulations – Academic Standing](#)) for the FGS requirements concerning “adequate progress”, and the conditions that lead to “poor academic standing” in the course work component.

Appeal Process for Course Work:

The University recognizes that there are instances when a student may wish to challenge University decisions about grades or academic policy. When a dispute arises, every effort should be made to resolve the issues informally rather than resort to a formal appeal. If, however, a formal appeal is necessary, the student should follow the Appeals Procedures in the most recent *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar* (see [Academic Regulations – Appeals](#)).

2. FIELD OF STUDY (FOS) WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS**FoS Written Examinations Requirements:**

CMSS doctoral students must successfully complete two FoS written examinations: (i) one written FoS examination in Strategic and Security Studies; and (ii) a second written FoS examination in their Dissertation Field.

Timing of the FoS Written Examinations:

The Supervisory Committee will determine the dates of the FoS written examinations. The FoS written examinations are expected to be completed in 15 to 19 months, and should take place no later than 20 months after the student's initial registration in the program. The written examinations are taken before the oral examination, with a maximum of two weeks between the second written examination and the oral examination.

Format & Structure of the FoS Written Examinations & Student Answers:

Each FoS written examination will be: 72 hours long; a take-home examination; written on a computer in a place of the student's choosing and with open access to the sources on the Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation Field reading lists. The answer to each question should be between 2500 to 3000 words in length.

The common Strategic and Security Studies reading list and the Dissertation Field reading list provide both the specific sources and broad areas for the FoS written examinations.

Setting the Questions for the FoS Written Examinations

For each written examination students will answer two out of the three questions provided on a question sheet. The student will write their answers over the 72 hours allotted for the examination. Generally, examination questions are broad and open-ended to allow students to demonstrate their breadth of core knowledge and understanding of the scholarship in the Strategic and Security Studies Field and the student's Dissertation Field.

The Supervisory Committee will set the questions for the Strategic and Security Studies written examination. The Supervisor will set the questions for the Dissertation Field written examination.

At least one week before the first written examination is to take place, questions for both of the FoS Written Examinations must be submitted to and approved by the FoS Examination Committee.

Student Preparation for FoS Written Examinations:

After no later than the student's ninth month in the program, the Supervisory Committee will meet with the student to provide guidance on preparation for the FoS Written Examinations. This meeting will have two key outcomes. The first is the crafting of a planning schedule in which the Supervisor will provide the student with a set of expectations for both the student and Supervisor, a schedule for their meetings, and suggestions for how the student should prepare for the meetings. The second outcome is to establish guidelines for feedback. The Supervisory Committee and the student will establish guidelines for feedback on the development of the student's knowledge and understanding of the FoS reading lists. The Supervisory Committee will specify whether the student can expect mostly informal feedback at the Supervisor-student meetings, and/or more formal feedback on assigned written responses, thematic overviews, essays, or mock examinations from the Supervisor and/or Supervisory Committee.

The Strategic and Security Studies reading list is a publicly available, pre-set list available on the CMSS website <https://cmss.ucalgary.ca/phd-program/candidacy>. The Dissertation Field reading list set by the Supervisor in consultation with the student, and must be determined no later than nine months after the student's admission to the program. The Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation Field reading lists will each comprise between 80 to 100 books with three articles/chapters representing the equivalent of one book.

FOS Examination Committee & Evaluation of the FoS Written Examinations:

The FoS Examination Committee will be formed when the request to schedule the Field of Study examination is filed and will consist of the Supervisory Committee and two other faculty members, both of whom are normally CMSS Fellows.

For both written examinations to be considered a "pass", students must: identify, display knowledge of, and make appropriate use of key literature as specified by the Security and Strategic Studies and Dissertation Field reading lists; show a sound understanding of the major debates and controversies in both fields; demonstrate an overall grasp of all sections of each reading list; demonstrate an ability to assess and critique the relevant literature in respect to specific issues or themes in both fields; be able to exercise critical judgement with respect to both fields; and, to analyze and present plausible positions on an issue.

Within one week of receiving the student's completed Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation Field FoS written examinations, the Examination Committee will determine the outcome of both FoS written examinations. The Examination Committee will judge whether both written FoS examinations are of sufficient quality for the student to pass on to the FoS oral examination. (For the FoS oral examination, see 3. below.)

A FoS written examination is a "pass" if the majority of the FoS Examination Committee have judged the examination to be a "pass". In case of a tied vote, or if the majority have judged the exam to be a "fail," the written examination will be a "fail".

The Graduate Program Director will inform the student of the results for both written examinations within one business day of receiving the Examination Committee member's assessment.

Successful Completion of the FoS Written Examinations Component:

Both the Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation FoS Written Examinations must be

a “pass” for the FoS Written Examinations component of the candidacy requirements to be successfully completed.

Failure & the Appeal Process for the FoS Written Examinations:

If one FoS Written Examination is a “fail”, a re-take examination in that Field will be permitted. If both FoS Written Examinations are a “fail”, then a re-take of both examinations in both Fields will be permitted. Normally, all re-take examinations will be written within two to six months.

Doctoral students at CMSS may make two attempts to successfully complete the FoS Written Examinations requirement. After a second failure, the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

In the case of failed outcomes, students have the right to appeal. Students must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please see the *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar* ([Academic Regulations](#) – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings).

3. FIELD OF STUDY (FOS) ORAL EXAMINATION

FoS Oral Examination Requirements:

CMSS doctoral students must successfully complete a single FoS Oral Examination that treats both the Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation Fields.

Timing of the FoS Oral Examination:

Normally, the FOS oral examination will occur no later than two weeks after the completion of the FoS written examinations. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to set up the oral examination.

Format & Structure of the FoS Oral Examination:

The FoS oral examination will consist of rounds of questions by members of the FoS Examination Committee. No one other than a member of the examination committee is allowed to question the student. All examiners must be given an opportunity to question the student during the early part of the examination.

The oral examination must not exceed two hours, not including the deliberation time of the FoS Examination Committee.

Students are allowed to take notes while a question is being asked. However they are not permitted to bring other materials into the examination except for hard-copies of their FoS written examination questions, their written answers, and the Field reading lists.

Setting the Questions for the FoS Oral Examination:

The questions asked of the student during the FoS oral examination will come from the members of the FOS Examination Committee and will not be circulated to the student.

However, the student's FoS written examination answers will be circulated among the examiners.

FoS Examination Committee & Evaluation of the FoS Oral Examination:

The Examination Committee used in the FoS written examinations will also conduct the FoS oral examination.

A member of the academic staff appointed by the Graduate Program Director chairs the examination. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

The Graduate Program Director shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between the student or the Supervisor and the additional members of the examination committee. See Graduate Studies Conflict of Interest Policy: <http://grad.ucalgary.ca/current/policies-forms/conflict-interest>.

A Postdoctoral fellow whose supervisor is on the supervisory committee may not serve on the examination committee.

The Supervisor is a voting member.

The FoS oral examination is a closed exam.

At the beginning of the examination the Neutral Chair will establish the order in which the Examination Committee members will pose their questions to the student as well as remind the examiners and the student of the CMSS Doctoral Candidacy Assessment Guidelines (<http://cmss.ucalgary.ca/phd/candidacy>). Questions will be asked in respect to the student's written FoS examination answers, questions on the written FoS examinations not answered by the student, and the Strategic and Security Studies and Dissertation Field reading lists generally. Examination Committee members may also ask about practical historical or present-day empirical cases as long as they are related to the student's preparation for the written and oral examinations. Examination committee members will evaluate the student's oral responses only.

Questions to the student should be clear and succinct. The student should be given reasonable time to answer. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation, or by leading the student. The Neutral Chair should guard against any tendency of examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the student.

All answers must verbally demonstrate: the student's ability to identify, display knowledge of, and make appropriate use of, key literature as specified in both reading lists; a sound understanding of the major debates and controversies covered in both reading lists, an overall grasp of all sections of both lists; the ability to assess and critique relevant literature in respect to specific issues or themes, exercise critical judgement with respect to both reading lists, and to analyze and present plausible positions on an issue.

The Neutral Chair must stop the examination if anyone needs to leave the room, and will reconvene the examination when all are present.

At the end of the examination, the student is asked to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner must identify which recommendation (pass/fail) he/she favours through a secret straw vote. This provides the committee with a frame of opinion on which to base a discussion of the student's performance.

Each examiner must record a recommendation of pass or fail on the official Report of Candidacy Oral Examination form-B.

Successful Completion of the FoS Oral Examination Component:

Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation. Successful completion of the FoS oral examination component is achieved when the final vote of the FoS Examination Committee is for a "pass". Should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the student will pass.

Failure & the Appeal Process for the FoS Oral Examination:

Should the outcome be two or more negative votes, the FoS Examination Committee's recommendation to the Graduate Program Director will be "fail".

In the case of a fail,

- **The Neutral Chair** must inform the student of the committee's recommendation immediately following the vote of the examination committee. The Neutral Chair will record the final recommendation of pass or fail on the Report of Candidacy Oral Examination form-B, which must be submitted to the Graduate Program Director within one working day of the completion of the examination.
- **The examiners** write brief memos to the Graduate Program Director explaining the reasons for their vote and submit within five working days from the date of the examination.
- **The Graduate Program Director** may uphold the 'fail' in the case of a clear fail or refer to FGS for a decision, in the case of an unclear fail. If the GPD upholds the "fail", after consultation with the Supervisor, the Graduate Program Director then summarizes the essential points from the memos to the student, copied to the Supervisor.
- **The Graduate Program** must send the *notice of a failed candidacy component* to the student within ten working days from the date of the examination.

Doctoral students at CMSS may make two attempts to successfully complete the FoS oral examination requirement. In the event of a failure a re-take examination must take place no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination. Normally, the composition of the committee will remain the same.

In reporting the results of the re-take examination, the committee will be limited to recommending either a pass (i.e., no more than one negative vote), or a fail.

A recommendation of “fail” requires that, within five working days:

- each examiner must submit a confidential written report to the Graduate Program Director, copied to the Supervisor, detailing the reasons for their vote.

The Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Graduate Program Director.

After a second failure the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

In the case of failed outcomes, students have the right to appeal. Students must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please see the *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar (Academic Regulations – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings)*.

4. THESIS PROPOSAL SUBMISSION & MEETING

Thesis Proposal & Meeting Requirements:

Doctoral students must complete a written Thesis Proposal, which is approved by their Supervisory Committee in a Thesis Proposal Meeting.

Timing of Thesis Proposal & Meeting:

No later than four weeks after their FoS Oral Examination, students must submit a Thesis Proposal to their Supervisory Committee. Within two weeks after receiving the Thesis Proposal from the student, the Supervisory Committee and the student will meet to discuss the proposal.

Guidance for the Preparation of the Thesis Proposal

The student should work closely with the Supervisory Committee when developing the Thesis Proposal. The Supervisor is the primary advisor.

Format & Content of the Thesis Proposal:

The Thesis Proposal sets out the student’s proposed research and will include: a focused research question and the context for the proposed question; the analytical or theoretical approaches to be used for the analysis; the research methodology to be employed; the contribution of the research to the relevant theoretical, empirical, and policy literatures; and a realistic completion schedule outlining the relevant phases of the research and writing of the doctoral dissertation. The research proposal must also be properly cited and include a bibliography of no less than three pages that consists of works cited as well as other important primary and secondary work relevant to the student’s proposed dissertation research. “Making satisfactory progress” in the doctoral program, means that a student must have their Supervisory Committee pass their Thesis Proposal.

Normally, the Thesis Proposal will be no longer than 3000 words, excluding citations, bibliography, and the dissertation completion schedule.

Evaluation of the Thesis Proposal:

The written Thesis Proposal will be assessed in a Meeting of the student and Supervisory Committee. The primary purpose of the Thesis Proposal Meeting is to provide students with an opportunity to present and discuss their research plan.

In this meeting, every member of the Supervisory Committee will have a chance to question the student on the Thesis Proposal and to provide constructive feedback.

The Thesis Proposal Meeting should last no more than one hour, not including deliberation. The Thesis Proposal Meeting is open.

Successful Completion of Thesis Proposal & Meeting Component:

Approval of the Thesis Proposal component is achieved when the Supervisory Committee judges the Thesis Proposal to demonstrate that the project, in its details, can be carried out by the student in a reasonable time and with the likelihood that the project could meet or exceed the Faculty of Graduate Studies' requirements for doctoral thesis quality (see *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar*, section [Theses – Quality of Thesis](#)).

When evaluating the Thesis Proposal, the options available to the Supervisory Committee are “Approved without revisions”, “Approved with minor revisions”, “Approved pending major revisions”, and “Not Approved”.

A second Thesis Proposal Meeting is required only in the case of a Thesis Proposal, which is “Not Approved”.

If minor revisions are required (normally, revision which can be completed within two weeks), the Thesis Proposal can be approved at the conclusion of the meeting. If major revisions are required (normally, revisions which can be completed within four weeks), the Supervisory Committee members will withhold their approval until an acceptable version of the Thesis Proposal is delivered.

Approved Thesis Proposals (with all necessary revisions made, and schedules for completion attached) will be submitted to the Graduate Program Director.

Failure to Approve & the Appeal Process for the Thesis Proposal & Meeting:

If a Thesis Proposal is “Not Approved”, the student will be requested to remedy the problematic areas identified in writing by the Supervisory Committee and resubmit the Thesis Proposal.

As per FGS requirements, the Thesis Proposal must be revised and resubmitted within two to six months of receiving notification of the fail and a second Thesis Proposal Meeting held.

Doctoral students at CMSS may make two attempts to successfully complete the Thesis Proposal component. After a second failed attempt the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

In the case of failed outcomes, students have the right to appeal. Students must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please see the *Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar* ([Academic Regulations – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings](#)).