



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CANDIDACY REQUIREMENT

Last Updated in March 2020, with minor revisions in August 2021

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

Department of History’s Graduate Program Statement of Purpose

Students passing the written and oral Field of Study (FoS) examinations, in addition to having their thesis proposal approved, will have demonstrated a combination of skills and knowledge that prepares them to conduct advanced research and attain sufficient core knowledge to teach in undergraduate university classrooms in their areas of study. To this end, the purpose of the candidacy requirements is to demonstrate students’ (1) familiarity with the most important literature in the primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary area of study; (2) understanding of major historiographical debates of their areas of study; (3) ability to read critically; (4) familiarity with a range of approaches/methodologies within their areas of study; and (5) ability to independently and effectively express arguments in written and oral form.

To achieve candidacy, a doctoral student must successfully complete the following components:

- All course requirements
- Second (non-English) language exam (if not completed at the Master’s level)
- Field of Study (FoS) written examinations in a primary and secondary area
- Oral FoS examination of the primary and secondary areas
- Approval of the thesis proposal

Course Requirements

See the [History program](#) entry in the FGS Calendar for details.

Second (Non-English) Language Requirement

A student entering the program, in consultation with the Interim Supervisor, is required to identify a non-English language relevant to their research and demonstrate in an exam an ability to competently read in that language. The student is not required to take the exam if he or she has provided the Graduate Program Director (GPD) a transcript record or written documentation demonstrating that the equivalent of the second language requirement has been fulfilled at the MA or BA level, within a formal language training program, or by other means of acquiring fluency.

Fall semester language examinations are normally scheduled in September. Language examiners, appointed by the GPD, are usually full-time members of the Department of History who have research abilities in the second language. Examiners normally choose a text from an academic article or book of up to 500 words and provide them to the Graduate Program Advisor (GPA) who schedules an exam sitting. Students, working independently on their language exam, are given two hours to produce a summary translation in English of the text in an exam booklet provided by the GPA. Foreign-language Dictionaries are allowed during the exam.

A student fails when he or she has been unable to translate a substantial portion of the text over the two-hour period or makes serious errors in summarizing its meaning. Students failing the exam on their first attempt are expected to improve their reading skills through independent study. They are also eligible to audit language courses and continue to retake the exam as their skills improve in the winter and fall session exam sittings.

Students cannot write their FoS examinations without first passing the second language exam. Should a student's failure to pass the language exam preclude them from advancing to their FoS examinations within the 20 month period of registration, the GPD, the Supervisor, and the student will meet to discuss ways that the student can meet the language requirement or change the thesis research so that the student can pass the examination in another language.

Students who fail the second language examination can appeal the decision to the GPD. In the case of an appeal, the GPD may turn to another member of the program to reevaluate the student's examination or to a faculty member external to the department working in the language. Should a second evaluator confirm the student's failure on the examination, he or she will have an opportunity to retake the examination in the following Fall or Winter semester. Should the student still wish to appeal the outcome from the second evaluation, it will be referred to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Composition of the Supervisory and Field of Study Committees

Upon entry into the program, a student is assigned an Interim Supervisor who is likely also to serve as the student's Primary Area Supervisor during the FoS examinations. Within three months of starting, the student consults with their Interim Supervisor to discuss the thesis topic and confirm a **Supervisory Committee** consisting of the student's Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist. Areas are listed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar. The Supervisory Committee also includes a third member normally from outside the Department whose research or methodology complements the student's research interest. In some cases, the student may be assigned a co-Supervisor, and/or a co-Specialist for their secondary area.

As a student nears the stage of readiness for the FoS written examinations, the Primary Area Supervisor, consulting with the student, identifies and confirms the availability of individuals to serve on a **Field of Study (FoS) Committee**. The committee comprises the student's Supervisory Committee as well as two individuals, one normally from within the department with research complementing the student's research, and a second, normally from outside the department, who is further removed from the student's primary and secondary areas. The FoS Committee will serve to evaluate the written FoS examinations and sit on the student's oral FoS examination. The Primary Area Supervisor must inform the GPA of FoS Committee membership at least four weeks before the first written exam is to begin.

Format of the Field of Study Written Examinations

The written FoS examinations comprise two separately scheduled exams. One exam tests the student's primary area while the other tests their secondary area. The exams are normally written over a two-week period. Each exam requires the student to write two answers from a choice of six questions. The exam questions are normally broad and open-ended to allow the student to demonstrate the following: breadth of core knowledge and major historiographical debates of the area; critical reading skills; familiarity with a range of approaches/methodologies within the area, and an ability to independently and effectively express arguments in written form.

In their answers, students must explicitly cite by name the authors they are using to support their arguments. Formal bibliographic references and a bibliography, however, are not required. Should a student write formal bibliographic references to support an answer, footnotes or endnotes will not be included in the answers' word count.

The Supervisor writes the six questions for the written primary area FoS examination and provides them to the GPA. The GPA then gives the exam questions to the student on the day of the exam. The student is required to write two answers from the six questions provided. Each answer should be written as prose narrative to a maximum of 3000 words.

The Secondary Area Specialist writes the six questions for the written secondary FoS examination and provides them to the GPA. The GPA gives the exam questions to the student on the day of the exam. The student is required to write two answers from the six questions provided. Each answer should be written as prose narrative to a maximum of 2500 words.

Both exams are written by the student at home, within 48 hours of receiving the questions. Normally, an exam is given to the student on a Tuesday and returned at the same time on a Thursday. If the student is unable to write the exam at home, he or she can request special accommodation, with justification, from the GPD to write, for example, in an office in the Department of History within the same period of time. Students can request that special accommodations be made by the program provided through [Student Accessibility Services](#).

When developing the FOS examination questions, the Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist may determine that one of the questions on one of the two exams will test the student's ability to design a course or to lecture in their area(s).

Within one week of receiving the student's two completed written examinations, each member of the examination committee will evaluate them, judging whether each are of sufficient quality for the student to pass on to the FoS oral examination. If a written examination is judged, overall, to be of sufficient quality, the committee member will give that examination a "pass."

If either of the written examinations, overall, is determined by a committee member to be a "fail," they will provide a brief account of that examination's shortcomings and suggest what remedial actions are needed. Each committee member will submit to the GPD their assessment of each of the two examinations (i.e., "pass" or "fail" plus remedial actions recommended in the case of a fail) within one

week of receiving the two completed FoS written examinations.

An FoS written examination is a “fail” if two or more of the FoS examination committee members have judged it to be a “fail”. Otherwise, the examination will be considered a pass.

The GPD will inform the student and examining committee members of the results for both written examinations within one business day of receiving all the committee members’ assessments. If indicated, the student’s scheduled oral examination will be cancelled at this point.

Successful Completion of the FoS Written Examinations Component:

Both primary area and secondary area FoS written examinations must be a “pass” for the FoS written examinations component to be successfully completed.

Failure and 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 re-take examinations in both Fields will be permitted. Re-take exams will be written within two to six months after the failure. The student and Supervisor will decide when the rewrite will be taken in respect to the extent of remedial actions recommended by the examining committee in its reports. A student may make two attempts to successfully complete the FoS written examinations requirement, after which he or she will be required to withdraw from the program. If the outcome of any component of the Candidacy Requirements, including the FoS written examinations, is a fail, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Procedures for appeal are described in the Graduate Calendar under [Academic Regulations](#).

Format of the Oral Field of Study Examination

The student who has passed the written FOS examinations must take an Oral FoS examination that treats both their primary and secondary areas, usually scheduled within two weeks of the conclusion of the last written examination.

At the beginning of the oral FoS examination, the Neutral Chair, chosen from within the Department, establishes the order in which examiners will take turns posing their questions. The Neutral Chair ensures that examiners ask questions succinctly and that the student has sufficient time to answer in full a question. Normally, two rounds of questions will be directed to the student’s written responses, the questions not answered on the written examinations and to test the student’s comprehensive reading. Further rounds of questions are permitted so that the committee feels that the student has been sufficiently examined. The oral FoS examination is up to two hours in duration, not including the FoS Committee’s deliberation.

The student is allowed to take notes while a question is being asked. However, he or she is not permitted to bring other materials into the exam except for the written examinations, their answers, and the reading lists.

After the oral examination, the student is requested to leave the room. Before any discussion of the student’s performance begins, each examiner must identify, by secret ballot, a recommendation for pass or fail on the oral examination answers. This procedure provides the committee with a frame of opinion

upon which to base a full discussion of the student's performance. After the discussion a final vote is taken. Should the outcome include two or more negative votes on the oral examination, the student will receive a fail on the exam and will be required to retake the oral examination within two to six months.

Failure and the Appeal Process for the FoS Oral Examination

In the case of a fail, the Neutral Chair of the examination will instruct the committee members who judged it a fail to provide written reports within two business days that explain why the student has failed and provide feedback on needed improvement. The Neutral Chair will also immediately inform the GPD of the failure. The reports provided by the FoS Committee will be directed to the GPD, who will provide them to the student, the Supervisor and the Secondary Area Specialist. The student, in consultation with the Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist will choose a date for retake based on the remedial actions recommended by the examining committee in its reports. The student will be requested to withdraw from the program upon a second failure of the oral FoS examination.

Appeal of Failed Field of Study Examination Results

If the outcome of any component of the Candidacy Requirements, including the FoS oral examination, is a fail, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Procedures for appeal are described in the Graduate Calendar under [Academic Regulations](#).

Thesis Proposal Approval

The student in consultation with their Supervisor formally begins developing their thesis proposal in the eighth month of the program. It is important for the student to begin preparing the proposal early so that it will be ready to submit to the Supervisory Committee within two weeks after successfully passing the oral FoS examination. The thesis proposal will be approximately 2500 words in length plus a bibliography. No later than two weeks after receiving the student's proposal, the Supervisory Committee meets with the student to evaluate it.

The Supervisory Committee assesses the proposal on the following criteria: the problem or question that the research seeks to answer; the historiographical significance and originality of that problem; the hypothesis for addressing the problem; the method for exploring that hypothesis; and the inventory of the most relevant evidence for the method. The proposal should also include a bibliography of at least three pages listing the most relevant primary and secondary work for the thesis.

After discussing the proposal as a group, the student will be asked to leave the room so that members of the committee can deliberate. To be considered as having completed this candidacy requirement, a student must have their Supervisory Committee sign the Approval of Thesis Statement Proposal form, provided by the GPA.

In the event that more than one member of the committee is of the opinion that the thesis proposal cannot be approved, the Supervisor will inform the GPD immediately and each committee member will provide the Supervisor with written reports on the thesis proposal within two business days. The student, with the guidance of the Supervisor and in response to the committee's reports, will have an opportunity to resubmit the proposal to the Supervisory Committee within two to six months. Should the revised thesis proposal not be approved by the Committee, the student will be requested to withdraw from the program. If the thesis proposal is not approved, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies. Procedures for appeal are described in the Graduate Calendar under [Academic Regulations](#).

Overview of the Process of the Field of Study Written and Oral Examinations and Thesis Proposal

The student will begin preparing for their FoS examinations on entry into the program, broadening their core knowledge, expanding an understanding of methodologies in historical study, developing critical thinking and written and oral skills as an historian. The steps towards the FoS examinations will normally take place in the following manner after a student has entered the program:

Prior to the beginning of classes: an Interim Supervisor is assigned to a student to determine the student's relevant Second (non-English) Language requirement and course selection.

Month 1: If the student has not already met the program's second language requirement, he or she writes the program's second language examination. A student failing the examination will begin building skills in the language through course auditing or independent study.

Month 3: the Supervisory Committee is formed, usually confirming the Interim Supervisor as the Supervisor of the student's primary area, in addition to the Secondary Area Specialist and another faculty member normally from outside of the Department of History, whose research or methodology complements the student's research interests.

Months 3–4: The student and their Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist meet to organize the student's preparation for the FoS examinations. This meeting will determine the approximate calendar dates of the two FoS written examinations, the oral FoS examination that follows them, and the thesis proposal. It is expected that the examinations will be scheduled to ensure that a student completes their candidacy requirements within 16 to 18 months, and no later than 20 months, of first registration in the Ph.D. program.

The meeting between Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist with the student will also establish expectations of both the student, Supervisor, and Secondary Area Specialist. The Supervisor and Specialist can determine the frequency of their meetings with a student during and after the year of course work, how the student should prepare for meetings, and the way that students will receive feedback. Supervisors and Specialists will specify whether students can expect informal feedback as they move into their comprehensive readings or whether they can expect more formal feedback on assigned written responses, thematic overviews, essays or mock FoS examination answers.

At this meeting, the Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist might also identify to the student some of the titles that will make up their comprehensive reading lists.

Months 5–6: Students who have previously failed the second language examination will retake the exam.

Months 6–8: The student and their Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist will prepare two comprehensive reading lists, one for the primary area and the other for the secondary area. The comprehensive reading list serves as a means by which the student can, with the guidance and input of the Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist, arrive at a comprehensive understanding of their primary

and secondary areas. It is expected that no later than the end of the 8th month after a student's entry into the program, 80% of the comprehensive reading lists for the primary and secondary areas will be established. Up to 20% of a reading list might remain unspecified as a contingency to meet unanticipated needs by the student in gaining core knowledge. The length of the list will be 120-140 titles for the primary area and 60-70 titles for the secondary area (with the understanding that three articles or stand-alone chapters in essay anthologies are the equivalent of one book).

Month 8: After completing course work, students normally turn their attention to the comprehensive reading lists established for their primary and secondary areas. They meet with their Supervisor and Secondary Area Specialist and receive feedback on their progress. Students can also consult previous exams assigned in their areas, available from the GPA, to see how exam questions related to readings are often framed.

Months 8–15: In consultation with their Supervisor, the student begins to formally prepare the thesis proposal.

Months 13–14: Students who have previously failed the second language examination will retake the exam. If a student is still unable to pass the exam, the student and their Supervisor, along with the GPD, will meet to discuss the student's learning strategies and ways to improve them.

Months 14–16: The FoS reading lists for the primary and secondary areas are to be fully established no later than one month before a student writes the exam for each. No additional readings will be assigned after this time.

Months 14–16: Before the Written FoS Examinations: As the student nears the first of their written examinations, the Supervisor, in consultation with the student, determines the composition of the FoS Committee and confirms the following: (1) the two calendar dates for the written primary and secondary area FoS examinations, usually within a two-week period, (2) the date for the Oral FoS examination, normally within two weeks after the last written examination is completed, and (3) the date for approving the student's thesis proposal. The discussion of the thesis proposal is scheduled within one month of the oral FoS examination.

The dates of the written and oral FoS examinations, as well as the thesis proposal, are contingent on the student's progress, their passing of the second language requirement, and the availability of members of the FoS Committee. A Supervisor, then, may have to adjust the exam schedule established earlier in the program to meet the needs of the student and the scheduling requirements of Committee members. However, should the student require an oral FoS examination date beyond the 20 month limit, the Supervisor will submit a written justification to the GPD for approval. The justification is to be signed by both the student and the primary area Supervisor.

One month before the scheduled oral FoS examination, the Supervisor instructs the GPA to file a Notice of Candidacy, which publicly announces the date of the oral FoS examination and the composition of the FoS Committee.

Months 15–19: Written Primary and Secondary Area FoS Examinations. Students write their primary and secondary area FoS examinations. The two are normally taken within a two-week period.

Months 16–19: Oral FoS Examination. After the student has passed both primary and secondary FoS written examinations, the student and the FoS Committee meet for the oral FoS examination on the date established in the Notice of Candidacy.

Months 16–20: Submission of Thesis Proposal: The student submits a written thesis proposal to each member of the Supervisory Committee within two weeks after passing the Oral FoS examination. Within two weeks of submission the student meets with the Supervisory Committee to discuss the proposal and gain approval to complete Candidacy Requirements and move forward in their program.

The process of the Written and Oral Examinations and Thesis Proposal are summarized in the following Flowchart:

