

Instructions for PhD Candidacy Examinations
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

Candidacy exams should be completed by the end of fall term in Year 2 of the PhD. The timeline for all milestones related to candidacy exams includes:

On or before 31 May of year 1: topics and summary due to your supervisor and Graduate Chair

On or before 15 June of year 1: supervisory committee should be established and should meet to discuss proposed exam topics and process

On or before 1 July of year 1: Candidacy Exam Topics Approval form due to Graduate Chair. Once this form is submitted, the student has 5 months to complete the written portions of the candidacy exam.

By (approximately) 30 November of year 2: student submits their final course outline and research paper, which comprise the written portion of their PhD candidacy examination

By 15 January of year 2: oral candidacy examination scheduled and held. Typically, there should be at least two weeks and no longer than one month in between the submission of the written portion of the exam and the candidacy oral examination date. The mid-January date here provides some flexibility in scheduling the oral examination given the fall exam period and winter holidays.

I. Purpose of Candidacy Examinations

The candidacy examination in GSWS is intended to provide students with the opportunity to map, and demonstrate mastery of, the fields of expertise that will inform their independent doctoral research. A secondary goal of the candidacy examination process is to provide students with the experience of developing a course outline that reflects their areas of expertise. Students must develop one course outline and one research paper. To satisfy the requirements for both breadth and depth in knowledge of the fields of expertise that inform the student's research topic, the course outline should be designed at a second year level (breadth) and the paper should focus more specifically on theories and literature that directly inform the student's doctoral research (depth). Students may propose a course outline at a different level if this better suits their interests; this must be approved by the student's supervisor/s, committee members, and the Graduate Chair. In keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of our program, the research paper may take different forms depending on the student's needs, including a draft manuscript that the student can submit for peer-review.

II. Process of Candidacy Examinations

Develop Topics with Supervisor: By May 31 of year 1, the student, in consultation with the supervisor, decides on the topics for the course outline and research paper. Consideration should be given to how the topics of the course outline and research paper relate to the dissertation. (How will the process of preparing the course outline support the development of the thesis proposal? In what areas does the student need support to move their work forward?) It is the responsibility of the supervisor to work with the student to develop and focus the course outline and research paper topics. The student should prepare a summary of the candidacy exam topics (3-4 pages for *each* topic) that includes:

- (i) the working titles of each topic;
- (ii) a summary of the scope of each topic;
- (iii) a preliminary reading list (10-15 references for each topic); and (iv) how each topic relates to the student's dissertation.

Establish Candidacy Exam Committee and Approve Topics: A committee of three members (including the supervisor) is established by mid-June of year 1. The role of the committee members is to support the development of, and

participate in the oral examination of, the approved course outline and research paper. Members should be chosen to fill gaps required to assist in the development of the course outline and research paper. At least one member of the committee should be a faculty member appointed in GSWS. The supervisor contacts the committee members and provides them with the candidacy exam topics outline prepared by the student. **Candidacy exam committee members should meet with the student and supervisor to review and discuss the candidacy exam outline and indicate their approval of the course outline and research paper by signing and dating the Candidacy Exam Topics Approval form.** This form must also be approved by the Graduate Chair. The student will have five months from the date this form is signed to submit their course outline and research paper. A provisional examination date will be set, no later than 2 weeks after the course outline and research paper are submitted.

Consultation with Committee Members: Students may consult with committee members in developing their course outline and research paper. It is up to individual committee members to decide how they would like to be involved with students as they develop their candidacy exam materials. Members may provide feedback on the approved course outline and research paper in an individual meeting with the student or in a committee meeting arranged by the student or the supervisor. Student consultation with committee members should be undertaken with the understanding that it is the student's responsibility to conceptualize and develop their course outline and research paper. It is recommended that individual committee members meet **no more than twice** with the student during the development of their candidacy exam materials.

Submission of Candidacy Exam Materials: Typically, there should be at least two weeks and no longer than one month in between the submission of the course outline and research paper and the candidacy examination date. *The final course outline and research paper should be approved as ready for examination by the student's supervisor by November 30 of year 2.*

Exam and Evaluation: Once the course outline and research paper are submitted to the examination committee, a date is set for the oral examination that is 2-4 weeks from the date when the written portion was submitted. The student will meet with the candidacy examination committee. The candidate will be invited to give an oral presentation of 5-10 minutes (maximum). This will be followed by two rounds of questions by the three members of the committee. Committee members will be allowed to question the student for 20 minutes (maximum) in the first round and 10 minutes (maximum) in the second round. The supervisor will act as Chair to ensure these time limits. In keeping with the purpose of the exam, questions should focus primarily on demonstrating knowledge of the fields of expertise they have included in their course outline and research paper; pedagogical issues may be pursued with regard to course outlines but should be considered secondary in importance. In other words, the assessment of the course outline in the exam should focus primarily on demonstrating knowledge of the fields identified by the student's course topics rather than the student's pedagogical skills or teaching philosophy.

The student will be evaluated according to the following: pass, pass with minor revisions, major revisions with re-examination, fail (second attempt). The supervisor will record and oversee any required minor revisions, which will be completed by the student within two weeks of the examination date. Students who are required to make major revisions will be given one opportunity to revise and resubmit their candidacy exam within a time frame determined by the examination committee. Students who do not pass the exam upon re-examination will be required to withdraw from the program.

The examination form must be completed and signed by the supervisor and examiners and submitted to the Graduate Chair.

Once a student has successfully passed their examination, the student is considered a "candidate" for the PhD, or is "ABD" (has completed "all" their degree requirements "but the dissertation").

Forms are found on the GSWS website at:

http://uwo.ca/womens/graduate/phd_program/requirements.html

III. Content and Format of Candidacy Examinations

(i) Course Outline

It is important to recognize that the primary purpose of the candidacy exam is to support the development of the student's research. In this regard, for example, the annotated course outline enables the student to situate their work within broader fields of scholarly research (year 2 course). The course outline should be double spaced, with the exception of the bibliography, which may be single spaced. The total length for the course should be no more than 32 pages double-spaced, not including the bibliography.

In designing the course outline, students may choose to take advantage of the workshops in course outline design offered by the Teaching Support Centre. Students may have their course outline considered as a potential offering in the Department's undergraduate program and may have an opportunity to teach a course they have designed in year three or four of their program.

The course outline will consist of the following sections:

1. An introductory statement on the general subject area of the course and discussion of why the course is important and the contribution the course makes to the field/s of any of gender, sexuality, and women's studies (1 page max.)
2. A statement of the relationship between the course and the proposed dissertation (3 pages max.)
3. A description of the learning objectives for the course (1 page max.)
4. An outline of the methods of assessment, including mark breakdown and an explanation of how the methods of assessment will fulfill the course objectives and facilitate student learning (1 page max.)
5. A weekly breakdown of course readings with annotations (*assuming 3 hour classes and 13 weeks*). The annotations should provide enough depth to demonstrate the student's understanding of the course material. Annotations should also include a concise explanation of why the readings were selected and consider briefly how they will contribute to achieving the stated learning objectives. (13-26 pages max.)
6. A bibliography of works the student consulted in developing the course outline, in addition to the assigned readings (5-8 pages, max.)

(ii) Research Paper

The research paper should be prepared alongside the second-year course outline (see above). Whereas the course outline typically demonstrates breadth of knowledge in the general areas in which the student's doctoral research is situated, the research paper should demonstrate depth of knowledge of a specific area or topic that is related to the student's doctoral research. The research paper could take a variety of forms, in keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of the program, and in order to facilitate student progression in relation to the student's discipline/s and goals. One option is to draft a manuscript related to the student's doctoral research that could be submitted for peer review. Other options may also be identified by the student in consultation with the supervisor and the candidacy examination committee.

The research paper should include an introduction that lays out the focus of the paper and the presented arguments, and should clearly indicate the contribution the paper makes to the field/s of any of gender, sexuality, and women's studies. The paper should also consider the relationship between the focus of the paper and the student's doctoral research.

The research paper should be double spaced, with the exception of the bibliography, which may be single spaced. The research paper should be no less than 25 pages and no more than 30 pages double-spaced, not including the bibliography.