

PHD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION OR TRANSFER TO PHD FROM MASTER'S

All Master's students who wish to transfer to the PhD program and some direct-entry PhD students are required to successfully complete a Qualifying Examination. The 'Qualifying Examination' is an oral exam conducted by a student's Advisory Committee to assess whether they have adequate depth and breadth of knowledge in areas relevant to his or her research project to proceed toward candidacy for the PhD. If a PhD student has completed a thesis-based Master's degree in an area of study closely related to his or her PhD research at a university comparable to the University of Saskatchewan the Qualifying Examination is waived.

For students who registered directly into the PhD program the Qualifying Examination is normally held **4 months to 1 year after commencement** of the PhD program (unless waived).

For students transferring from a Master's program to a PhD program, the Qualifying Examination must be held after the first year of registration and **no later than the end of the second year**. In order to be considered for a transfer-to-PhD program, students must:

- Show great promise in academic accomplishments and in potential for research.
- Have completed 9 credit units with strong academic standing; a minimum average of 80% is normally required.
- Show evidence of good writing and oral communication ability.
- Demonstrate the necessary research skills and knowledge to be able to successfully complete a PhD dissertation.

A recommendation to transfer to PhD is initiated through a meeting of a student's Advisory Committee and the successful completion of the Qualifying Exam. This examination must be at least as rigorous as a Master's thesis defence and the student must demonstrate potential to obtain sufficient knowledge of his or her general field of study to be successful in a PhD program. This examination can only be taken once; a student who fails the Qualifying Exam cannot be recommended for transfer and must complete his or her Master's degree.

Nature of the examination:

The Qualifying Exam will have three main elements:

1. The written document, provided to the Advisory Committee members at least TWO weeks prior to the oral component of the qualifying exam. This document must contain:
 - A background section that highlights the research area leading to the aims of this research program (Max 5 pages), AND
 - A summary of research activities to date (max 5 pages) AND
 - A brief explanation of the research questions and major methodologies that will be used in the PhD program (Max 5 pages)
 - Students may consult with their supervisor and supervisory committee members as appropriate when preparing this document.
2. An oral presentation 20 minutes in duration containing:
 - The research activities undertaken by the student thus far
 - Actual results of the student's research with discussion about the meaning of these results

- A proposal for the major directions/objectives of the PhD
3. An oral exam structured similar to a thesis defence, with two rounds of questions from committee members regarding topics presented in the written document, including theory and methodology, as well as related areas that the student should reasonably be expected to know and understand, in view of the discipline and chosen area of research.

Procedure:

The student and supervisor will initiate the exam process by contacting the Graduate Administrative Support Person and Graduate Chair at least 6 weeks before the desired examination date. The Graduate Administrative Support Person will schedule the exam and book the room. The student will circulate the advisory committee at least TWO weeks before the exam date.

Examining Committee: The Qualifying Exam committee will consist of a minimum of 3 voting members and a non-voting chair:

- Chair (non-voting)
- Supervisor/co-supervisor
- One advisory committee member
- One CGPS member from another University of Saskatchewan unit who will agree to be the Cognate member on the student’s PhD committee

At the end of the Qualifying Exam, the student will be asked to leave the room and all the voting members of the examination committee will vote on whether the student successfully met the criteria for a “pass.”

Assessment:

- A “pass” will be granted if the committee agrees that the student meets ALL of the following criteria:
 - The research conducted by the student thus far clearly demonstrates a level of competence that is equivalent to a first year PhD student
 - The student’s knowledge and skills are adequate to independently respond to questions pertaining to the research direction and the proposed aims
 - The student’s oral and written communication is adequate for a first year PhD student
 - The PhD objectives/research questions represent an important contribution to current knowledge
 - There are adequate resources to carry out the proposed PhD

Following a successful qualifying exam, the chair will notify the Graduate Administrative Support Person who will submit a “Graduate Student Transfers” ticket through Jira (see below).