



Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology 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. Statement of Purpose

The Program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Calgary reflects a Scientist-Practitioner educational model with professional objectives that are informed by Clinical Science. Our program's emphasis on the term science underscores its commitment to empirical approaches to advancing knowledge. Admission into candidacy in the Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology requires that students have knowledge, technical skills, and abilities that are necessary to undertake advanced independent research. Specifically, it requires that students have expert knowledge in the narrow field of their thesis research, as well as a solid foundation in the areas of psychology that are of particular relevance to their specialty program.

B. Candidacy components

All doctoral students in the Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology must successfully complete the following components:

1. All course requirements*
2. Thesis proposal
3. Field of study (FoS) Written Examination
4. Field of study (FoS) Oral Examination

(*) Please note the Faculty of Graduate Studies regulation indicating that courses must be completed before the candidacy examinations does **not** apply to students in the Clinical Psychology Program. Students must indicate which required Program courses (breadth, elective, internship) are remaining in their degree Program. The Director of the Program will authorize a limited number of courses necessary to the Program’s requirements to be taken after the FoS examinations, subject to the approval of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Students who take any courses over and above those courses approved at the time of the Candidacy examination will be assessed extra-to-Program fees for these courses.

Timelines

The Faculty of Graduate Studies requires that doctoral students must complete all requirements for admission to candidacy within 28 months after initial registration in the doctoral program.

A formal Thesis Proposal meeting for the Doctoral dissertation should be completed by the Spring Semester in the first year of the Ph.D. program. The FoS Written and Oral examinations can only be held after the Supervisory Committee has approved a thesis proposal.

For students who have completed a Master’s in our program, the FoS examination is normally to be completed by the Spring semester in the first year of the Ph.D. program. For PhD students entering with a Master’s from another program, the FoS is normally to be completed by the Spring semester in the



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second year of the Ph.D. program. Students in the second category who wish to complete their FoS examination at the end of the first year of the Ph.D. program should discuss this with both the Program Director and their supervisor. The FoS Oral examination occurs within one to four weeks following the FoS Written examination.

There may be exceptional circumstances that would prevent a student from being able to write the FoS Exam in the Spring. Furthermore, students entering the clinical psychology program at the PhD level with a Master's from a non-clinical program should be aware that doing their FoS examination at the end of their second year PhD will be close to their final examinations in core clinical courses. If requested, in these cases the student will be allowed to defer their FoS examination to the following Fall (typically September) semester, and their progress through the program will not be impacted. **A student must obtain approval for delaying their FoS exam according to this schedule from the Graduate Program Director by the end of Winter term, prior to the Spring semester the FoS is set to be completed.**

C. Thesis Proposal

FGS candidacy regulations require that in order to be admitted to candidacy, the student must successfully complete a written thesis proposal that is approved by the Supervisory Committee (see [Academic Regulations - Admission to Candidacy](#)). **Please note the FoS examinations can only be held after the supervisory committee has approved a thesis proposal. Students are encouraged to develop, with their supervisor, a timeline to complete both their proposal seminar and FoS Written and oral examinations within these program guidelines.**

All Ph.D. students must submit a thesis proposal describing the planned project for the Ph.D. thesis to the members of their Supervisory Committee. This proposal is meant to outline the direction of the thesis research. Feedback from the Supervisory Committee will help to shape the student's research program. The thesis proposal provides the student an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from the committee. Students must consult with their Supervisors before submitting their proposal document to the Supervisory Committee for evaluation. The thesis proposal should include a review of literature sufficient to ensure the student is knowledgeable in the area of the thesis, research question(s), as well as detailed methodology outlining proposed experiments, and proposed data analyses. The thesis proposal must clearly explain the rationale, methodology, and planned analyses of the study. The document may be up to 30 pages in length (excluding references).

Normally, within 2 weeks after the submission of the thesis proposal to the Supervisory Committee, the Supervisory Committee meeting is scheduled.

Approval of Thesis Proposal

Approval of the thesis proposal takes place via a Supervisory Committee meeting. This Proposal meeting is chaired by the student's Supervisor, and provides an opportunity for the student to present his/her research plan. The student provides a brief (approximately 12-15 mins) synopsis of proposal, answers



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rounds of questions from the committee about it, and discusses improvements or amendments. Members of the Supervisory Committee must be satisfied that all of their concerns and questions are addressed.

The Supervisory Committee members will formally approve or disapprove of the thesis proposal, or will make approval contingent upon certain modifications (i.e. minor or major revisions, described below). Following the discussion portion of the meeting, the student leaves the room and the Supervisory Committee decides whether the written thesis proposal can be approved, considering all of the following: (1) theoretical and methodological rigor, (2) feasibility, (3) contributions of the proposed research to the field, and (4) written quality of the proposal document. Unanimous approval from the committee must be obtained for the student to proceed to the next phase of the proposed research (e.g., seeking ethics approval for the proposed research and beginning data collection).

Following the meeting, the Supervisor informs the student about the outcome of the thesis proposal and sends a memo indicating the outcome to the Graduate Program Director (and copies to the student and the Supervisory Committee members). Approval can be granted with minor revisions to the thesis proposal (i.e. revisions that can be made within a month), and the nature of the revisions should be outlined in the Supervisor's memo.

Once the Thesis Proposal is approved, the student has completed the Thesis Proposal component of the candidacy requirements.

If unanimous approval is not obtained from the Supervisory Committee, the student must prepare a revised thesis proposal (i.e. major revisions), addressing the concerns raised by the Supervisory Committee. After consultation with the Supervisor, the student can resubmit the revised thesis proposal to the Supervisory Committee no sooner than two months but not later than 6 months of the original proposal submission date. The Supervisor will arrange a second Supervisory Committee Proposal Seminar meeting to take place no later than 3 weeks after the thesis proposal resubmission (same procedure as described above) where the committee will make its decision about the revised thesis proposal.

If the revised Thesis Proposal is not approved, the student will be required to withdraw from the program. According to FGS regulations, a second failure on any candidacy component requires the student to withdraw from the program. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.

Appeals

If the outcome of any component relating to the Thesis Proposal or FoS Examinations is a fail, the student has the right to appeal the decision. Students must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies following the procedures described in the Graduate Calendar under [Academic Regulations – Appeals – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings](#)).



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D. FoS Written and Oral Examinations

Two of the most important issues in a FoS exam are the scope and breadth of the examination. Briefly, all of the articles from the current issue of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* will provide the foundation for the concepts to be covered in the written and oral FoS examinations. In their responses, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of core concepts and material, including but not limited to, theory, phenomenology, etiology, assessment, treatment, ethics, research design, and statistics. Answers should integrate material from students' psychology background. Furthermore, students should demonstrate knowledge of professional and diversity issues as relevant to the FoS material. Last, students will not be examined on specific clinical experiences related to their clinical practica, but rather will be asked to discuss the clinical application of FoS material (i.e. how this information might be applied in a professional setting).

D.1 Composition of the FoS Written and Oral Examinations Committee

The FoS Written and Oral Examinations Committee consists of the Supervisory Committee plus two additional members recommended to the Graduate Program Director by the supervisor.

D.2 FoS Written Component: The goal of the examination is to evaluate student's preparedness to undertake doctoral-level research in clinical psychology. Therefore, there must be at least two core clinical faculty members on the committee. The Supervisor will provide information about the proposed members of the examining committee so that the Graduate Program Director shall ensure to the best of their ability that no conflict of interest exists between the student or the Supervisor and the additional members of the examination committee according to FGS [regulations](#) (*Thesis Examinations - Internal and External Examiners*). One of the two non-Supervisory Committee members must be external to the Department if an external member is not already included in the Supervisory Committee. Please note: adjunct faculty members whose primary affiliation is outside the Psychology Department are considered external to the Department. The Supervisor, who is a voting member, will chair the evaluation meeting.

D.3 FoS Oral Component: The FoS Written Examination committee will serve as the FoS Oral Examination Committee, plus the addition of a Neutral Chair, who is a member of the academic staff appointed by the Graduate Program Director, and chairs the examination. The Neutral Chair is non-voting.

E. FoS Written and Oral Examination Components Timelines

It is the Supervisor's responsibility to arrange a convenient time and place for the meetings to evaluate the FoS Written and the Oral examination components. The student must never be involved in any aspects of exam arrangements. Evaluation of the FoS Written examination should take place approximately 1 week after the answers are submitted to the FoS Examination Committee. The FoS Oral Examination should take place approximately 1-3 weeks after the FoS Written Examination component is evaluated. In the event of a 'fail' on the FoS written component, the FoS Oral Examination will not take place.



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F. Process of FoS Written and Oral Examination Components

There are two independent components that are assessed in the FoS Examinations. First is the written work, and second is performance in the oral.

The FoS Written exam is divided in two parts, conducted on the morning (part 1) and afternoon (part 2) of the same day. The morning section requires students to answer three integrative questions based upon issues reviewed in the latest edition of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* (available online through the University library). The edition available four months prior to the exam is considered the latest edition to allow students time to review the content. To avoid any confusion, the director of the program will indicate via a written email the specific volume and number of the issue of the journal that will be tested at least four months prior to the exam. The afternoon section consists of an article review question focusing on providing a critique of an article (selected from a peer-reviewed journal from the broad literature in the field of Clinical Psychology or related disciplines), e.g., its methodology, statistics, theory, and ethics. Students are presented with the article and an accompanying question. The questions for the FoS Written component are developed by faculty members, including the Program Director, and reviewed by program faculty before being presented to the students.

On the date assigned for the FoS Written examination (normally in early April), all students will be given by the Program Director (or designate) at 9:00 a.m the morning section questions to complete independently but in a group setting in a location that will be pre-specified for this purpose. Students can bring an **unmarked** copy of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, but no other notes or materials. The student then has three hours (until 12:00 p.m.) to prepare their responses independently. The Program Director will collect responses at 12:00. Students will pick up the afternoon section question at 1:30 and will have two hours to prepare their responses independently, in a closed-book manner.

The written answers and *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* readings will form the basis for the FoS Oral examination component (see below). Thus, evaluation of the FoS Written component will be based on whether the student (a) adequately and appropriately responded to the questions/topics, (b) synthesized and integrated information from the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* and (c) demonstrates an understanding of and ability to evaluate key issues.

G. Evaluation of FoS Written Component

In a meeting attended by the FoS examination committee, each examiner will submit to the Supervisor their vote (pass/fail) on the entire Written Component of the FoS examination. The initial recommendation is non-binding. All question(s)/topic(s) are evaluated as a whole. That is, a single “pass” or “fail” is given for the parts 1 and 2 of the FoS Written component. The initial vote provides the committee with a frame of reference on which to base a discussion of the student's written performance. Discussion of the student's answers to parts 1 and 2 of the FoS Written component will then take place. At the end of the discussion, the committee members will cast a second vote. If the student receives 1 negative vote or less, the recommendation of the FoS Written component is



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considered a pass. The Supervisor informs the student and the GPD of the decision. If the student passes, he/she will go on to complete the scheduled FoS Oral Examination.

H. Timeline, Structure and evaluation of the FoS Oral Component

The FoS Oral component proceeds in a second meeting, 1 to 3 weeks (dependent on availability) following the evaluation of the FoS Written component. It will only proceed if the FoS Written examination received a pass from the Examination Committee. The FoS Oral Examination component may deal with any area reviewed in the most recent edition of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, which will form the basis of the FoS Oral examination. Students can bring **unmarked** copies of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* and their written answers, but no other notes or materials.

The examination should not exceed two hours. This does not include the deliberation time of the Committee. All examiners should be given an equal opportunity to question the student during the early part of the examination, e.g., by rounds of questioning.

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.

The Neutral Chair must stop the exam if one of the examiners needs to leave the room and will reconvene the exam when all examiners are present.

At the end of the FoS Oral examination, the student is asked to leave the room. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner uses a blind ballot to declare an initial non-binding recommendation (pass/fail). The Neutral Chair collects the individual ratings and declares the results of the "straw vote" to the committee. This provides the committee with a frame of reference on which to base a discussion of the student's performance. At the end of the discussion, the committee members cast a second round of votes. If the student receives 1 negative vote or less, he/she passes the examination.

I. Possible Outcomes of FoS Written and Oral Examinations

Committee's recommendations are made separately for the FoS Written and Oral components. Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation for each component. Following each of the deliberations (one for Written, one for Oral), each examiner must record a recommendation of pass or fail on the official Report of FoS Written and Oral Examination forms, respectively. Should the outcome of the final vote for a component include no more than one negative vote, the student will pass for that component. Three outcomes are possible for the FoS Examinations (see below).

a) Passing both the Written and Oral components.

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b) Failing the Written FoS component only: If the written component receives a fail then students will be required to retake and pass the FoS Written examination component before they can undertake the FoS Oral Examination. The re-take of the FoS Written examination will include new/revised questions to be addressed using the same set of readings, no sooner than 2 months of the student receiving the fail and no later than 6 months. Another meeting will be scheduled approximately 1 week after the FoS examining committee receives the answers to the retake FoS Written examination, to discuss and vote on whether the answers of the retake FoS Written examination will receive a pass or fail. The student only has one opportunity to retake the FoS Written component. If the student fails a second time, he/she will be asked to withdraw from the program. If the student passes, then the Oral Examination will take place within approximately 1-3 weeks. Scheduling of the re-take written examination and the subsequent oral examination follows the same procedure as stated above for the first round.

c) Passing the Written examination but failing the Oral component only: The written materials completed for the first oral examination as well as the readings from the most recent issue of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* will be evaluated during the retake examination. The student only has one opportunity to retake the oral component. If the student fails the oral component a second time, he/she will be required to withdraw from the program. The retake of the FoS Oral examination must be scheduled no sooner than 2 months and no later than 6 months upon receiving a fail.

In the case of a student failing any or all components of the FoS examination, the Chair (Supervisor for the FoS Written component, Neutral for the FoS Oral component) will write a brief memo detailing the procedures of the exam, and *each examiner* will write a brief memo to the Graduate Program Director (GPD) explaining the reasons for his/her vote. This should be submitted to the GPD within five working days from the examination date. This outcome represents a recommendation to the Graduate Program Director, who can uphold or dismiss the committee's decision to fail.

The Graduate Program must send a Notice of a Failed FoS (Written or Oral) Component to the student within ten working days from the examination date.

J. Retake of the FoS Written or Oral Examinations

The student will be allowed one retake of the FoS Written and one retake of the Oral examination (see chart below). The retake may take place no sooner than 2 months and no later than 6 months from the date of the first scheduled FoS examination. Normally, the composition of the examining committee will remain the same.

In reporting the results of the retake 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 his/her vote.

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- The Chair (Supervisor for the Written, Neutral for the Oral) must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Graduate Program Director.

If the Graduate Program Director upholds the recommendation of fail, the student will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* and supporting documents to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.

K. Summary Of Candidacy Examinations Responsibilities in FoS Examination

The Supervisor

- (a) is responsible for knowing the Program guidelines for examination as well as the appropriate Graduate Studies regulations concerning Candidacy examinations;
- (b) in conjunction with the student and the examination committee, sets a date for the FoS Oral examination.
- (c) discusses this policy and the procedures for the TP and FoS examinations with the student, and ensures that procedural questions are answered at least three months before the formal examination period. If students have specific questions regarding the FoS readings, these questions should be answered prior to the call for FoS Written component questions from the Program Director to faculty. Once the FoS examination has been distributed to the Clinical Psychology faculty, no discussion of FoS Written component material should occur.
- (d) provides a memo to the Program Director or designate recommending the composition of the Examining Committee at least five (5) weeks prior to the anticipated oral defense date.

The Neutral Chair

- (a) chairs the FoS Oral Examination component in accordance with Faculty of Graduate Studies' procedures.
- (b) ensures that one copy of the "*Report of FoS Oral*" is appropriately initialled and signed by all the committee members, and that it clearly indicates in the space provided whether the examination outcome is a Pass or Fail.
- (c) signs the "*Report of FoS Oral*" and submits it to the Program Director or designate for signature.
- (d) in the case of a Fail ensures that each committee member provides a written analysis of the FoS Written and Oral components of the examination within 5 working days. These reports are given to the Program Director or designate and are then forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The Program Director

- (a) sets the dates for each sitting of the FoS Written and Oral examinations.

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- (b) works with the clinical faculty to ensure that appropriate questions are prepared for each sitting of the FoS Written component of the examinations.
- (c) approves the final list of questions to be used in each sitting of the FoS Written examinations.
- (d) approves and recommends to the Faculty of Graduate Studies the FoS Oral examination committee for each student.

FoS Examining Committee

- (a) is responsible for having familiarity with the content of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* on which the student will be examined.
- (b) is responsible for knowing the date and place of the examination, and for being on time.
- (c) is responsible for having carefully read the written answers and for preparing appropriate questions for the candidate.
- (d) is responsible evaluating student knowledge and understanding of core concepts and material, as detailed above.

The Student

- (a) is responsible for knowing the Program guidelines for examination as well as the appropriate Graduate Studies regulations concerning Candidacy examinations.
- (b) is responsible for knowing the dates, times and place of the FoS Written and oral examinations.
- (c) picks up the FoS Written examination questions from the Program Director or designate and returns the completed examination on the examination day.
- (d) reports any problems or concerns about the examination to the Supervisor or to the Program Director immediately.

The Graduate Program Administrator

- (a) in conjunction with the Supervisor, ensures that all Graduate Studies regulations are complied with.
- (b) photocopies all examination questions (one copy for each examiner and one for the student).
- (c) circulates copies of the written answers to members of the FoS Written Examination Committee.
- (d) helps the Supervisor with the physical arrangements for the examination (e.g., room bookings, photocopying, etc.).
- (e) provides each member of the examination committee, and the student with a copy of the *Notice of Oral* form and provides the neutral chair member with one copy of *Report of FoS Oral* form on the day of the Oral.
- (f) provides all forms in a timely manner and ensures that they are signed, including the *Notice of FoS Oral* and the *Report of FoS Oral*
- (g) receives the original copy of the *Report of FoS Oral* after the examination, obtains the Director's signature on it, and immediately notifies Graduate Studies of the examination outcome.



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- (h) informs the Supervisor of any problems (e.g., examination committee not receiving approval, etc.).
- (i) keeps all records of the examination in student's file.

Core Clinical Faculty (Program in Clinical Psychology)

- (a) Reviews the content of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* and proposes integrative questions. Three of these are selected by the Graduate Program Director for inclusion in the FoS Written Examination.
- (b) Helps identify an article for review and prepares an accompanying question.

Appeal of the Failed Candidacy Examination

In the case of a failed Candidacy examination, students have the right to appeal. Students must appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies following the procedures described in the *Graduate Calendar* under [Academic Regulations – Appeals – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings](#).

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Flowchart with Timelines for the FoS Examinations

