

CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PH.D. ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

The purpose of the oral comprehensive examination for Ph.D. trainees is to: (1) assess a student's fundamental knowledge regarding existing information, theories and concepts related to their chosen field of research; (2) assess mastery of and ability to rationally defend their planned dissertation project including their proposed research, relevant methodologies as well as their applications, and anticipated outcomes and interpretations; and (3) evaluate their suitability to continue that research. Once initiated, an examination may not be continued at a later date. The student will either pass or fail the examination as administered on that date.

The advisor typically chairs the GAC during the exam. Alternatively, a dean's representative (DR) will be appointed by the associate dean for graduate education (ADGE) as chair of the GAC for the exam by discretion of the ADGE or upon request by any of the following: the student, any GAC member including the advisor, or the graduate program director. The appointment of a specific individual as DR can be challenged with cause by any of the above. The ADGE will consider the challenge and proceed with either the original or an alternate individual as DR. The DR will be from outside the original GAC, but will participate as a voting member of the GAC for purposes of the exam. The chair will:

1. Lead the exam meeting and ensure the exam process is appropriate, equitable to the student and maintains the standards of excellence in our programs.
2. Instruct the GAC as a whole on the purpose of the exam, focusing on the points above.
3. Together with the other members of the GAC, establish the general protocol for the questioning period (e.g. 10-15 minutes per GAC member and number rounds of questions). If the exam is lengthy (e.g. longer than 2 hours) or if the student is exhibiting signs of distress, the chair may call for a brief recess.
4. At the conclusion of the questioning, the chair excuses the student and requests a motion and a second of PASS or FAIL for the exam outcome from the other GAC members. The chair calls for and participates in discussion from all GAC members. At the conclusion of the discussion, the chair calls for a vote on the motion by show of hands. All GAC members including the chair must vote either PASS or FAIL on the student's performance. The GAC members including the chair are the only persons allowed to vote. More than one negative vote constitutes failure of the exam.

If the student does not pass the exam, the chair should ask the other GAC members if they support a re-examination. If so, an approximate date for re-examination will be determined by the GAC members along with a remediation plan. The Advisor (or Program Director) is responsible for petitioning for the re-examination to the ADGE for review by the School of Medicine Graduate Programs Committee.

5. Recall the student and inform them of the outcome. If the student does not pass the exam, the chair (or another GAC member) relays to the student the recourse decided upon by the GAC.
6. Complete the examination outcome form indicating whether the student passed or failed the exam (including signatures of all GAC members) and provide it to the Office of Graduate Education. Alternatively, the chair can email the outcome of the exam to the Office of Graduate Education with cc: to all other GAC members.

Approved by the SOM Graduate Programs Committee: 2023.04