



## School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Doctoral 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 PhD in Environmental Design challenges students of diverse professional backgrounds to become interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners through quantitative and/or qualitative research that advances knowledge in environmental design. A student who has fulfilled the Candidacy requirements in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape is prepared to undertake independent research, having demonstrated: expert knowledge of the subject matter related to the proposed research; the ability to evaluate critically the broader, interdisciplinary literature that informs their research; and the ability to apply relevant research methodologies on their way to producing original contributions to the fields of environmental design.

### **B. Requirements**

All doctoral students in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape must successfully complete the following components:

1. All course requirements as identified in the [calendar](#).
2. Thesis proposal approved by the Supervisory Committee.
3. Written Field of Study (FoS) Examination, after the thesis proposal had been approved.
4. Oral Field of Study (FoS) Examination, after the written FoS examination had been completed successfully.

The entire candidacy process must be completed within **28 months** of the student’s first registration.

### **Stage 1: Completion of all Course Requirements**

The Supervisor will ascertain that the student has completed successfully all required course work. The Supervisor will confirm the student’s course completion status with the Graduate Program Administrator prior to planning the next three stages of Candidacy.



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### **Stage 2: Approved Thesis Proposal**

When the Course Requirements are complete, and prior to the FoS Examinations, all students must submit and orally present a Thesis Proposal in a meeting of the Supervisory Committee. The approved proposal represents an initial “road map” for the work to be conducted in the remaining months of the program. Given the range of disciplines and approaches within environmental design, students should seek the mentorship of their supervisor to produce a Thesis Proposal document that is acceptable for their research area.

The thesis proposal should be 3000-5000 words and include the following:

1. Research question(s) and motivation
2. Proposed contribution and relationship to literature
3. Methodology to address research question(s)
4. Preliminary results (if applicable)
5. Other details (e.g., timeline or research plan)

#### *Scheduling of the Thesis Proposal Meeting*

The Thesis Proposal Meeting must be completed within 22 months of first registration in the doctoral program (typically by the end of the second academic year). It is the role of the Supervisor to schedule the Thesis Proposal Meeting with the Supervisory Committee. A draft of the Thesis Proposal must be provided to the Supervisory Committee no less than two weeks prior to the date of the Thesis Proposal Meeting

#### *Conduct of the Thesis Proposal Meeting*

The primary purpose of the Thesis Proposal Meeting is to provide students with an opportunity to present and discuss their plan to undertake a thesis research project with their Supervisory Committee, and to gain valuable insight and feedback to improve the research plan. The Supervisory Committee will use their collective expertise to help the student develop a sound research plan, particularly with respect to an achievable scope of the research, appropriate research design, and feasible methods. Thus, the Thesis Proposal Meeting is meant to ensure that students are well prepared and adequately supported to undertake and complete the independent research they intend to pursue.

The Thesis Proposal Meeting can begin with an optional short presentation (10 – 15 minutes) by the student regarding his or her proposed research plan. Committee members will engage in discussion with the student regarding his or her research approach, design, methods, logistics, scope, anticipated outcomes and contribution to the field, or other topics as written in their Proposal. The Thesis Proposal Meeting shall not exceed two hours.



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At the end of the Meeting, the Supervisory Committee must unanimously agree that the written Thesis Proposal is acceptable. A Thesis Proposal is judged to be acceptable based on the clarity of research question(s) and objectives, and their contextualization within environmental design literature; the definition of the scope of research; and the logic and feasibility of the research methods and plan.

If minor revisions are required, the Thesis Proposal can be approved at the conclusion of the Meeting. If more substantial revisions are required, Committee members may withhold their approval until an acceptable draft of the Proposal is delivered. If a Thesis Proposal is judged to be unacceptable, then each Supervisory Committee member will provide written feedback to the student within one week of the Thesis Proposal Meeting explaining what elements of the Proposal must be improved, and providing advice to aid the student in completing an acceptable Thesis Proposal. If the Committee determines that the Thesis Proposal is unacceptable, the student must submit a revised draft of the Proposal to be discussed in a second Thesis Proposal Meeting no sooner than two months, and no later than six months following the date of the first Thesis Proposal Meeting. If the second Thesis Proposal Meeting is not successful, the student will be required to withdraw from the doctoral program.

Each member of the Supervisory Committee must sign the Thesis Proposal approval form. Along with the signed form, a copy of the approved Thesis Proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Program Administrator to be added to the student's file.

### **STAGES 3 and 4: Field of Study Examinations**

All doctoral students in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape must complete both Written and Oral Field of Study Examinations, which are designed to develop and to evaluate their understanding of the fields within which their research is situated. A secondary purpose of the written and oral exams is to ensure the student's ability to communicate knowledge, ideas, or logical arguments in an effective manner.

#### *Scheduling of FoS Examinations*

The process for the Field of Study Examinations is begun once the student's Thesis Proposal is approved by the Supervisory Committee. If the Thesis Proposal was accepted pending minor revisions, the Field of Study Examinations may be scheduled before final approval of the proposal is obtained, at the discretion of the Graduate Program Director. It is expected that the scheduling of the Field of Study Examinations will be discussed between the Supervisory Committee and the student at or near the time of the successful Thesis Proposal Meeting.

The Written and Oral Field of Study Examinations should be completed between two and six months following the approval of the Thesis Proposal, and before the end of the 28th month in



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the program. A date for the oral examination must be agreed upon by the Examination Committee prior to setting the date for the distribution of the written exam questions to the student. There must be exactly one month in between the beginning of the written examination and the date of the oral examination. The Supervisor shall schedule the Written and Oral Field of Study Examinations and advise the Graduate Program Administrator of the details, and the Administrator shall arrange a room for the Oral exam.

### *Composition of FoS Examination Committee*

The FoS Examination Committee will evaluate both the Written and Oral Field of Study Examinations. The Examination Committee will consist of the Supervisory Committee members plus two additional faculty members, at least one of whom must be from outside the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. These two additional examiners will be selected by the Supervisor in consultation with the student and the Supervisory Committee. It is expected that the composition of the Field of Study Examination Committee will be discussed at or near the time of the successful Thesis Proposal Meeting. The approved Thesis Proposal is distributed to the additional examiners.

The additional examiners must be approved by the Graduate Program Director not less than two months before the oral examination. The Notice of Oral Candidacy Examination form, listing all members of the Examination Committee, must be submitted to the Graduate Program Administrator at least four weeks prior to the Oral FoS exam, and kept in the student's file. A Neutral Chair will be assigned to oversee the Oral FoS Examination (see below).

### *Format of Written FoS Examination*

The Written FoS Examination will be in 'take home' format, to be completed in two weeks, and will consist of three questions. The length of the written answers may be specified by the Supervisory Committee, but normally, individual answers should be 2,500 to 4,000 words in length with a maximum of 12,000 words for the entire written exam.

### *Process of Written FoS Examination*

In preparation to undertake the Field of Study Examinations, students should consult with their Supervisory Committee to establish 3-5 topic areas in environmental design that are directly relevant to the research described in their Thesis Proposal. At the discretion of the Supervisor, the additional examiners also may be consulted by the student regarding exam preparation (e.g., to obtain background readings, to define the boundaries of topic areas).

The Supervisor will ask each Supervisory Committee member to prepare one or two draft question(s) for the written examination; the Supervisor also may prepare questions. At the discretion of the Supervisor, the additional examiners also may be invited to participate in



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developing questions. The Supervisor coordinates the development of exam questions, and provides guidance to avoid substantial overlap (e.g., the Supervisor may suggest that certain Committee members focus their written questions on certain topics). Examination questions are expected to be consistent with the topic areas developed by the student and the Supervisory Committee members. Questions should address aspects of theory, method, and application in relation to the topic areas. Questions may bridge more than one topic area.

The Supervisor will collate the questions proposed by different examiners, eliminate redundancies, and circulate a draft of the exam questions back to the Supervisory Committee members, who must provide written consent over email to the list of questions to be posed to the student. The three exam questions must be circulated to the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Program Administrator at least one week prior to the start of the written examination.

On the start date of the written examination, the Graduate Program Administrator forwards the questions to the student. The written examination must be completed and returned electronically (PDF) to the Graduate Program Administrator no later than 14 calendar days from the start date when the questions were distributed to the student. Electronic confirmation of receipt is required: 1) from the student when the exam is sent out; and 2) from the Graduate Program Administrator (or designate) when student exam answers are returned. On receipt from the student, the Graduate Program Administrator immediately distributes (within one working day) the written answers to the Examination Committee.

### *Evaluation of Written FoS Examination*

Within one week of receiving the student's completed written FoS examination, each member of the examination committee will read and evaluate it, judging if the written answers are of sufficient quality for the student to proceed to the oral FoS examination.

To be of sufficient quality, the student's written responses should reflect appropriate breadth and depth of understanding about their topic areas and the interrelationships among their topic areas. All responses must demonstrate a critical analysis of the questions posed. The written responses should draw on the literature pertinent to their topic areas, considering alternative and conflicting views where appropriate.

If a Written FoS Examination is judged, overall, to be of sufficient quality, the committee member will give that examination a pass. Each committee member must communicate their grade of Pass, in writing, to the Graduate Program Administrator within one week of receiving the exam to read.



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If a Written FoS Examination, overall, is judged by the committee member to be a Fail, he or she will communicate this assessment to the Graduate Program Director, in writing, within one week of receiving the exam to read (or to the Dean of the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, if the Graduate Program Director is a member of the Examining Committee). Included in this communication of a fail, the committee member will provide a brief account of that examination's shortcomings and suggest what remedial actions are needed.

A Written FoS Examination is considered a fail if two or more of the Examination Committee members have judged the examination to be a fail (see below for re-take procedures). Otherwise, the examination will be considered a pass. The Graduate Program Director will inform the student and the examining committee members of the result of the Written FoS Examination within one business day of receiving all the committee members' assessments.

In the case of a fail, within two days of receiving the accounts of the Examination Committee members, the Graduate Program Director (or the Dean) will communicate in writing to the student, summarizing the essential points from the accounts received from the Examination Committee members, with a clear indication of the next steps for the student. If the Written FoS Examination is a fail, the student's scheduled oral examination will be cancelled.

### *Format of Oral FoS Examination*

The Oral Field of Study Examination supplements the written examination, and provides the student with an opportunity to clarify, discuss, and defend their written responses, as well as to be questioned orally about their topic areas. Students may also be questioned about the relationship of their written and oral responses to the research outlined in their approved Thesis Proposal. That is, students are expected to be able to locate their specific research area within the broader interdisciplinary milieu of environmental design, and discuss its potential contribution to their field, to environmental design, and to society. If there was a choice of questions offered in the Written FoS Examination, examiners may ask the student to discuss Written FoS Examination questions for which no written responses were prepared.

### *Conduct of the Oral FoS Examination*

A member of the academic staff is appointed by the Graduate Program Director to be Neutral Chair for the Oral FoS Examination. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

The Chair will facilitate rounds of questions to the student and ensure that examiners focus their questioning on the pre-determined topic areas agreed upon by the Supervisory Committee. The Neutral Chair will ensure that examiners ask clear and succinct questions and that the student has ample time to respond or seek clarification to each question. If the student



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has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not engage in a prolonged interrogation of the student. The duration of the oral examination will not exceed two hours.

### *Outcome of the Oral FoS Examination*

At the end of the Oral Field of Study Examination, the student is asked to withdraw from the room, and the Neutral Chair immediately manages a secret straw vote in which all examiners indicate either pass or fail for the exam. The evaluation is based on the examiners' comprehensive review of all responses to the questions posed in the Oral FoS Examination.

The pass/fail votes provide the Committee with a frame of opinion on which to base a discussion of the student's performance on the Oral FoS Examination. Every effort should be made by the Examination Committee to reach a unanimous recommendation of pass or fail. A failure is indicated by two or more examination committee members voting for a failed examination; otherwise, an examination will be considered a pass.

When deliberations are completed, the Neutral Chair will record the final outcome and have each Examination Committee member record their vote on the designated form. The Neutral Chair will then immediately inform the student about the outcome of the examination. The Report of Candidacy Oral Examination form must be delivered to the Graduate Program Administrator within one business day of the exam's completion.

### *Committee Procedures for Failed Oral FoS Examination*

If an Examining Committee recommends a fail on an Oral Field of Study Examination, each member will provide a detailed letter to the Graduate Program Director (or the Dean of the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, if the Graduate Program Director was a member of the examining committee) stating the rationale for his or her evaluation. The Neutral Chair also will provide a letter that details the examination procedures, including timing and any irregularities that may have been observed. Each letter must be delivered within one business day following the date of the Oral FoS Examination. Within two business days of receiving the letters from the Examination Committee, the Graduate Program Director (or the Dean) will communicate in writing to the student indicating whether the recommendation of fail is upheld; this letter also will summarize the essential points made in the letters received from the examiners, with a clear indication of the next steps for the student.

### *Re-take of FoS Examination Components*

If a student fails the Written Field of Study Examination, then one re-take of it will be permitted, and the three questions will remain the same as in the first Written Field of Study Examination. If a student fails the Oral Field of Study Examination, one re-take of it will be permitted.





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Any re-take of an examination must occur between two and six months following the date of the first examination. Normally, the composition of the examination committee remains the same. If a student fails either FoS examination component (written or oral) a second time, they will be required to withdraw from the PhD program.

*Appeals*

If the outcome of any component of the Candidacy Requirements relating to the Thesis Proposal or Field of Study 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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