

## Timelines for achieving PhD Candidacy in EOAS

April 15, 2025

The timelines presented below are relative to the date of entry into the PhD program. As per G+PS regulations, the initial candidacy exam must be completed within 24 months of PhD studies. At the discretion of the supervisory committee, up to 6 months can be added to these timelines for students who transfer from a MSc/MASc program to the PhD program. These transfer students will thus have a maximum of 30 months to take the PhD candidacy exam from the date of entry into the MSc/MASc program.

It is required by G+PS that all doctoral students be admitted to candidacy within 36 months from the date of initial registration ([Comprehensive Examination and Candidacy - Graduate School - University of British Columbia - Vancouver - Canada](#)). A student who is not admitted to candidacy within this time period will be required to withdraw from the program. Extensions may be granted under exceptional circumstances and with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Note: The date of initial registration for students who have transferred from a MSc/MASc program is the initial registration to the Masters program, NOT the date of transfer to the PhD program.

Keeping in mind that the PhD program is designed as a 4-year program, it is beneficial to identify a research topic and plan in a timely fashion. If candidacy has not been reached after 24 months, it is unlikely that the program can be completed in four years. The timelines provided below are designed to provide PhD students with the opportunity to complete their degree in a reasonable amount of time.

A separate document ('EOAS\_PHD\_Candidacy\_Exam\_Guidelines\_2025') explains the department philosophy regarding PhD Candidacy exams and provides general guidelines for how the exams should be conducted

The on-line 'GradMe' tool should be used to record the outcomes and discussion points for all supervisory committee meetings and the candidacy exam.

It is ultimately the student's responsibility to set the date and identify personnel for the PhD candidacy exam. However, it is expected that Research Supervisor will provide assistance and guidance in this process (e.g. suggestions for potential external examiners). Additionally, the Graduate Program Coordinator must be kept informed of the date set for the examination.

### **Timeline for achieving PhD candidacy**

1. **First Year Review.** It is recommended to form a supervisory committee as early as possible, ideally during the first term of studies. Once the supervisory committee is formed, it is recommended to set up an initial committee meeting to discuss the general research direction. The initial meeting also provides an opportunity for the student to meet all committee members and to collectively identify the best way of supporting the student. It is not expected that a research plan has been developed prior to this first meeting.

Approximately nine months (two academic terms) after a student has entered the PhD program (e.g. April / May for students who start in Sept.), a supervisory committee meeting is convened with the aim to help the student prepare for the candidacy exam. The composition of the

supervisory committee must be formalized at that time. At this meeting, the student gives a short presentation outlining major research themes of interest and academic / research progress to date. The committee has the option to provide feedback and recommend reading materials to provide additional context for the research. A preliminary list of potential subject areas for the PhD exam should be discussed and recorded in the meeting notes. At this time, the committee should also provide general guidance on the structure and content of the PhD proposal.

2. **Draft Proposal Submission.** This should occur within ~ 15 months of entry into the PhD program – i.e. 6 months after the First Year Review. A meeting should be scheduled shortly after submission of the draft proposal, so that the supervisory committee can provide detailed feedback and determine whether the ideas presented in the proposal are sufficiently well developed to allow the student to proceed with the Candidacy exam. It is expected that the proposal will be revised, based on committee feedback, prior to the exam.
  - a. If the draft proposal is deemed to be acceptable (pending suitable revisions), the PhD exam should be scheduled within ~ 3-6 months (i.e. 18 – 21 months into the PhD program).
  - b. If the draft proposal is deemed unacceptable, the student has an additional 3 months to submit a revised version based on detailed feedback from the committee. After submission of the revised draft proposal and a follow up meeting with the supervisory committee, the student must schedule a PhD exam within 3 – 6 months (i.e. 21 – 24 months into the PhD program).
3. **PhD Candidacy Exam.** Based on the timelines above, all PhD students must take a candidacy exam within 18 - 24 months of entry into the PhD program. Extensions beyond these time-limits will require approval of a Graduate Advisor and will only be made under exceptional circumstances. Requests for extensions should be made well in advance of the deadline.
  - a. At the meeting where the draft research proposal is accepted, the committee has the option to select subject areas that will be covered during the PhD exam in addition to the defense of the proposed research. These subject areas should be broadly related to the candidate's proposed research. If additional subject areas are identified, a general statement of reading topics should be documented in the meeting report, while specific reading lists will be provided to the student by each supervisory committee member in follow up one-on-one meetings. The detailed reading lists should be established as soon as possible after the acceptance of the draft proposal, and at least three months prior to the PhD exam.
  - b. An external examiner should be selected for the PhD Candidacy exam at least two months prior to the exam date. This examiner should have a general understanding of the broad research area but cannot be on the student's supervisory committee or have a close involvement with the student's research project. The student should provide the external examiner with the most recent version of the proposal and should arrange a meeting to discuss exam topics and reading lists.

- c. A Chair for the exam should be identified at least one month prior to the exam. The Chair's role is to moderate the exam, document the results and ensure consistency and fairness across the department. There is a committee of Emeritus Professors (current list on 'GradMe'), who serve as PhD exam chairs.
- d. A final version of the proposal should be submitted to the examining committee at least two weeks prior to the Candidacy exam. This finalized version of the proposal must be officially accepted by the supervisory committee members as part of the Candidacy Exam.

### Summary of timelines and milestones

1. First Year Review at 9 months
2. Draft Proposal Submission at 15 months (if necessary, revised proposal submission at 18 months)
3. PhD Candidacy Exam at 18 – 21 months (in case of draft proposal re-submission, PhD exam at 21 – 24 months)
  - a. Selection of external examiner at least two months prior to the exam
  - b. Selection of exam chair at least one month prior to the exam
  - c. Submission of final thesis proposal to examining committee at least two weeks prior to the exam

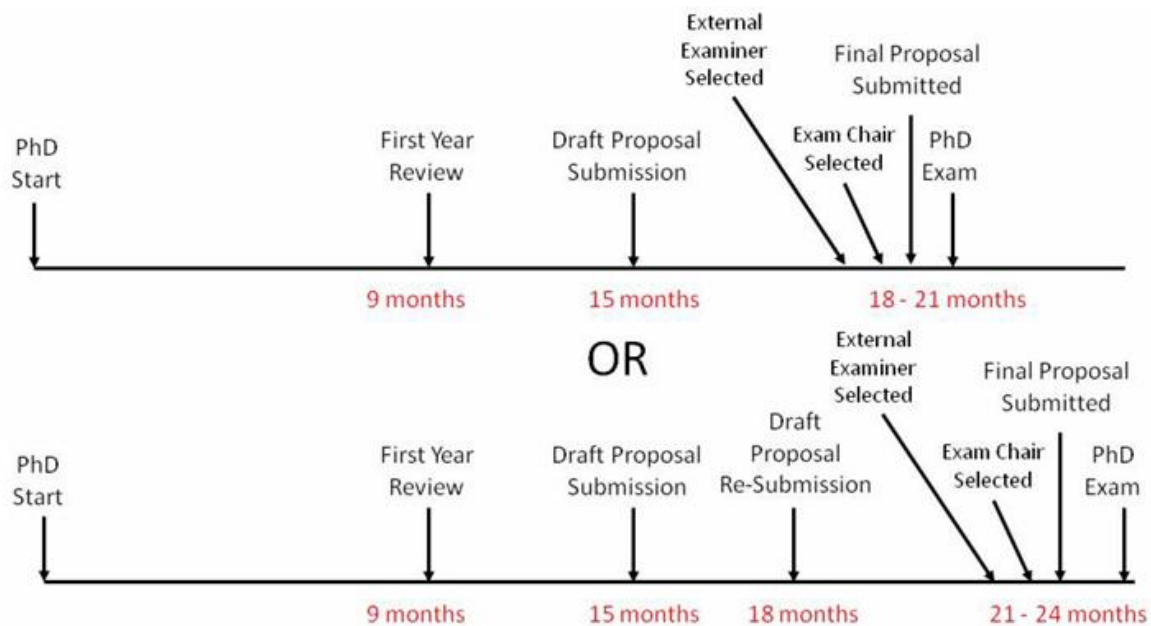


Figure 1: Timeline for PhD candidacy exam in EOAS

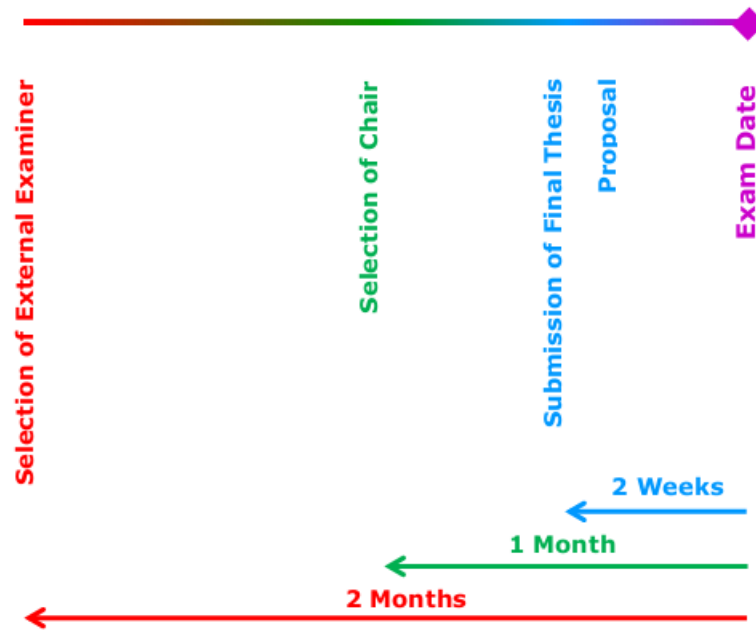


Figure 2: Detailed timeline for scheduling of PhD candidacy exam in EOAS (does not include preparation of draft proposal, see Figure 1)