

Policy on the comprehensive examination and the submission of the thesis proposal

At the end of the first year, Probationary Doctoral Candidates are required to take a comprehensive examination and to defend a prospectus (thesis proposal).

The comprehensive exam is an oral exam. It covers questions related to the major track chosen by the probationary candidate. The questions are linked to the specific subjects studied by the Candidates in their coursework. The four questions are distributed to the candidates well before the exam. On the examination date shortly before the oral examination, each candidate will have to draw one out of the four questions. Comprehensive examinations may be retaken only once.

The prospectus must be orally defended in the presence of the primary supervisor (a written report by the supervisor is also acceptable), in front of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. This committee shall be composed of: the members of the Doctoral Committee; additional faculty members selected by the Doctoral Committee, with the aim to assure a satisfactory representation of each major field of study at the department; one faculty member of the IRES department. The Comprehensive Examination Committee shall grade the comprehensive exam, as well as the quality of the prospectus and its oral defense. The Doctoral Committee may ask the candidate to modify the prospectus, and resubmit it to a Prospectus Examination Committee.

The prospectus must indicate the topic of the dissertation and include an elaboration of the research question, a critical survey of the relevant literature, a detailed research plan, a preliminary structure of the thesis, a bibliography of the literature, and a short description of both the research methods and the resources needed to conduct the research. The prospectus is supposed to be of 25-30 (double-spaced, Font: 12, Times New Roman) pages long, excluding bibliography and appendix pages. Probationary candidates are expected to work closely with their supervisors to prepare the prospectus. Examples of prospecti which have been defended successfully at the department are available upon request.

Regarding the format of the Comprehensive Exam/Prospectus Defense of the Dept. of Political Science please follow these general rules. Probationary Doctoral Candidates:

1. should come 15 minutes beforehand to the departmental coordinator's office and draw the question and have time to prepare the answer. No additional materials can be used for this exercise.
2. will first have to answer the comprehensive exam question before the Examination Committee. There are approx. 10-15 minutes available for this task.
3. will then have to present the prospectus in 10-15 min. Any material related to the prospectus can be used, such as a printed version, an outline, PowerPoint, slides, etc. Candidates planning to use PowerPoint are asked to inform the

departmental coordinator at least a week before via email in order to avoid technical difficulties.

4. will finally have to answer questions from the Examination Committee on their prospectus. This part will last about 30 minutes. Candidates are asked to follow the time limits in order to ensure that there is enough time for discussion.

After all Probationary Candidates completed their exams, the Examination Committee members will deliberate and then hold a secret ballot assigning the final grades. Candidates will receive a report written by the Examination Committee on their performance and grade at the comprehensive exam and the prospectus defense immediately after the Examination Committee meeting is adjourned.

Every year the comprehensive examination is scheduled for early June (please check the academic calendar for the exact date). In order to be admitted to the second year of the program, Probationary Candidates will have to earn:

- a "B+" grade or higher course grade average,
- a "B+" grade or higher at the comprehensive examination, and
- a "B+" grade or higher for the prospectus defense.

Admission to the program as a probationary candidate is no guarantee that you advance to the doctoral candidate status.