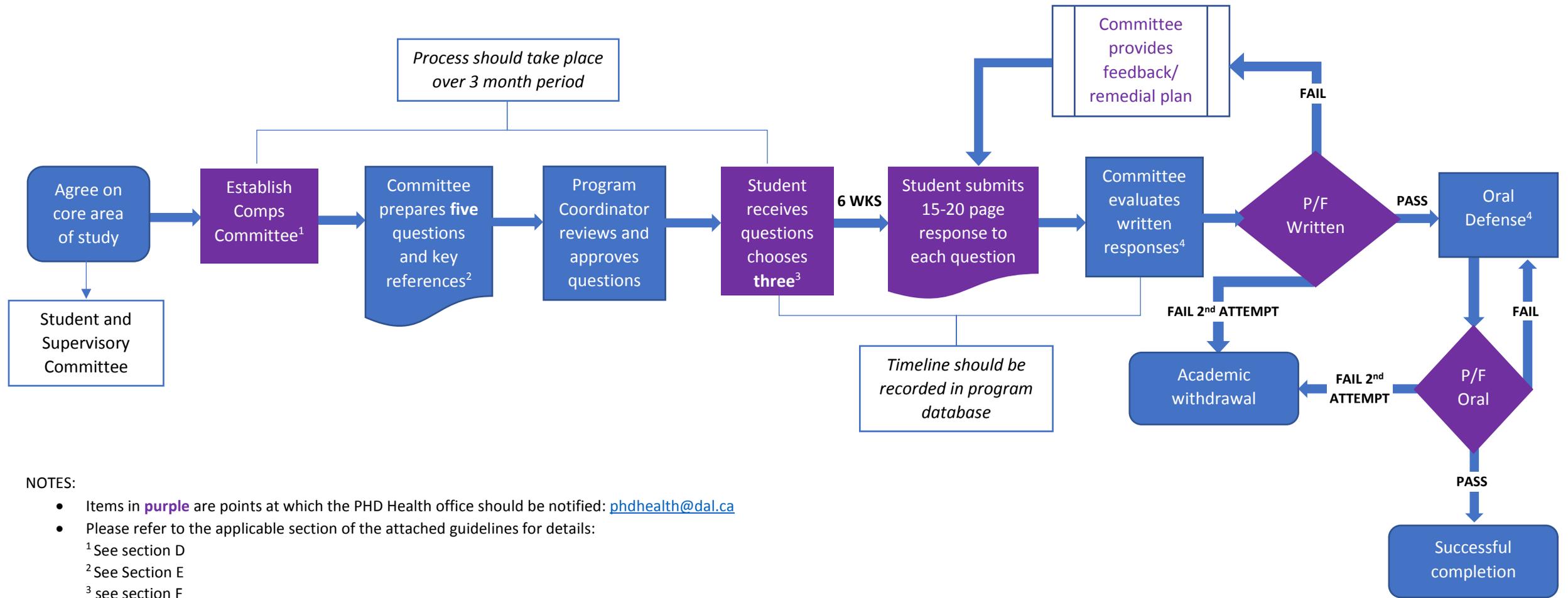


PhD in Health

Comprehensive Exam Guidelines Process Map



NOTES:

- Items in **purple** are points at which the PHD Health office should be notified: phdhealth@dal.ca
- Please refer to the applicable section of the attached guidelines for details:
 - ¹ See section D
 - ² See Section E
 - ³ see section F
 - ⁴ Evaluation forms attached

PhD in Health Program

Comprehensive Exam (HLTH 8000) Guidelines

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is for the PhD in Health candidate to demonstrate the background preparation necessary for the successful completion and defense of their doctoral dissertation. Its intent is both normative and pedagogical: serving as a mid-degree check on candidate's knowledge, understanding synthesis and analytical skills in their area of research appropriate to the doctoral degree. Furthermore, it will assist in preparing the candidate to write and successfully defend a quality PhD dissertation.

This examination will normally occur at approximately the 1.5-2-year point of the PhD program after the area of study for the dissertation has been defined and the coursework completed. The candidate should demonstrate: (i) evidence of substantial understanding of the core knowledge areas related to the dissertation subject area; (ii) evidence of good scholarship including a command of the literature, use of primary references, originality of written text and thought, intellectual honesty; (iii) appropriateness of answers given demonstrating a level suitable to the doctoral degree; (iv) ability to analyze the pertinent literature and synthesize the broader concepts; (v) grasp of the broader issues in scientific and health knowledge surrounding the specific dissertation research topic and how they bear on the dissertation research.

B. Objectives

- (i) To ensure by written and oral examination that the candidate is in command of the multidisciplinary literature broadly underpinning his/her dissertation. If not, then areas of deficiency should be identified and the necessary remedial action taken to gain this knowledge.
- (ii) To provide a quality check on the candidate's approach to their science/research, and their ability to function at a high level of scholarship consistent with the academic model for the highest degree the university awards including intellectual rigor and honesty.

C. Preparation of the Candidate

By the end of the first year of study (second in the case of students enrolled in the 3 year residency program) the candidate should reach agreement with the Supervisory Committee on the core areas of study that underpin the proposed dissertation. Discussion should begin at this point regarding possible external members of the examining committee.

D. Membership of the Examination Committee

The Comprehensive Examination committee will consist of the candidate's Supervisory Committee, plus at least one other faculty member who is a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and who holds an appointment in the Faculty of Health. The external member need not have specific expertise in the student's area of research. The primary role is to assist in ensuring that questions

are varied, appropriate and framed to evaluate the student's research and capability from a broader context related to the WHO definition of Health.

E. Guidelines for Question Development

The examination will take the form of **five questions**, which should reflect the specific areas for intensive study of the literature prior to the examination.

- (i) Members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee with specific expertise in one or more of the core areas specified for study (in section C above) should be identified and asked to draft one or more questions specific to their area. The questions posed should require the candidate to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic, and abilities to analyze, synthesize, and interpret the literature.
- (ii) Questions should be reviewed by all members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee to ensure that the scope of the exam addresses the topics identified.
- (iii) Students are **not** to participate directly in the development of questions.
- (iv) Members of the Comprehensive Examination committee may provide key references related to any or all of the questions but this is not a requirement.
- (v) The questions must be approved by the PhD in Health Program Coordinator approximately two weeks in advance of the scheduled exam.
- (vi) Sample questions will be made available upon request of the Supervisor to the Program Assistant.

F. Procedure for Comprehensive Examination

At the time of the exam it is expected that the candidate will be familiar with the literature on the topics selected for examination as they will have at minimum a general understanding of the pertinent dissertation topic areas. The examination will focus on augmenting this knowledge, demonstrating the candidate's ability to critically analyze the literature, synthesize that information, and directly answer the questions posed. The candidate should anticipate that he/she will be required to devote their academic time exclusively to the examination during the 6-week examination period in order to provide quality written documents and then successfully defend those documents and his/her knowledge at the oral examination.

Written Examination:

On an agreed upon date, the candidate will be presented by their Supervisor with the five questions approved by the Comprehensive Examination Committee and PhD in Health Coordinator. He/she will then choose **three (3)** of these questions and will answer them in three corresponding original, scholarly documents of **15-20 pages in length**. Each document will have the format of a scientific journal review paper and the candidate will have **6 weeks to complete all three documents** before submitting them to the Comprehensive Examination Committee for review. Students may hand completed documents back to the committee prior to the end of the 6-week period, however **no feedback will be provided** until the exam period is complete.

If and only if all three documents are judged by the Comprehensive Examination Committee as meeting the standards for the examination, the candidate will be invited to defend the documents and his/her background knowledge in an oral examination.

Please note that while the supervisory committee and student may wish to structure the written examination in a format that could result in a research 'product' (e.g., peer reviewed publication), this is not a requirement of the comprehensive examination process, nor is it a **criteria** by which the responses will be evaluated.

Oral Examination:

The chair for this examination will be one of the committee members as chosen by consensus. **For each of the 3 documents submitted and graded in the written component**, the candidate will have 5 minutes to provide an overview of their response (format to be decided by the candidate and may include a presentation). This 5 minute overview will be followed by a ~ 40 minute round of questioning, beginning with the external member and then the Supervisory Committee.

Successful examination will be based on consideration of both the written documents and the oral defense.

G. Evaluation of the Written Documents and Oral Examination

Written Document:

Evaluation of the written documents is to be completed prior to the candidate moving forward to the oral examination using the appropriate form(s) and as per the details below. *It is recommended that this fillable PDF be completed by the Supervisor on behalf of the Comprehensive Exam Committee following deliberations regarding the written portion of the exam.*

1. Did the candidate answer the questions posed?
2. Did the documents satisfy the expected level of academic performance as described in the second paragraph of Section A above.
3. Was the document written at grammatical and scientific levels as would be expected to write a successful PhD dissertation?

In adjudicating the documents, the Comprehensive Examination Committee will seek consensus of opinion in answering questions 1–3 above for each document submitted. In the case where consensus is not achieved, a majority vote will rule. If there is an even number of committee members, a majority vote amongst the members— excluding the Supervisor—will rule.

In the case where one or more documents are judged to not meet the standards of the examination, the candidate will be given an opportunity to revise the document (s) The time frame for the revisions or re-examination will be agreed between the candidate and the Comprehensive Examination committee, but is not to exceed the initial time allotted for the written component (i.e., 6 weeks). If the committee deems a specific course of action is required to aid the candidate in remediating the written component of the comprehensive exam, a request to delay the start date of the remedial may be made to the PhD in Health Coordinator. As is deemed appropriate, the

Committee members should provide detailed guidance to the candidate regarding improvement of the documents and/or oral examination performance toward successful adjudication.

Successful written examination will be achieved by approval of all three documents submitted. Failure to achieve this approval after two rounds of submission will be considered a failure. Failure would thus be grounds for the candidate's withdrawal from the PhD program in Health.

Oral Examination:

Evaluation of the oral examination is to be completed using the appropriate form(s) and as per the details below. It is recommended that the fillable portion of this form be completed in advance and at least one printed copy brought to the student's oral examination meeting for completion following deliberations.

1. Did the candidate provide convincing answers to the questions posed during the oral examination?
2. Did the answers to the questions posed during the examination satisfy the expected level of academic performance as described in the second paragraph of Section A above.
3. Was the candidate able to support his/her answers with evidence from the literature?
4. Was the candidate able to engage in scientific dialogue appropriate to function in scientific meetings, presentations, etc.?

In adjudicating the oral examination, the Comprehensive Examination Committee will seek consensus of opinion in answering questions 1–4 above for each document submitted. In the case where consensus is not achieved, a majority vote will rule. If there is an even number of committee members, a majority vote amongst the members—excluding the Supervisor—will rule.

If the answers to questions 1-4 for the oral examination are judged to not meet the standard for all three documents, the candidate will be given an opportunity to re-sit the exam. Failure to achieve approval of the oral examination performance in the two rounds will also be considered a failure. Failure would thus be grounds for the candidate's withdrawal from the PhD program in Health.

H. Post-examination Remediation

In keeping with the pedagogical objectives of the Comprehensive Examination, the Committee may follow the examination with recommendation of remedial work for the candidate, the objective being to optimize the likelihood of success in writing the PhD dissertation and in its oral defense. Such remedial work may consist of:

- (i) directed study of certain areas of the literature to supplement perceived areas of weakness;
- (ii) additional coursework; or
- (iii) other work as is deemed appropriate. The remedial work will be carried out under the guidance of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee.

Comments:

Post-examination remediation

In the case where one or more documents are judged to not meet the standards of the examination, the candidate will be given an opportunity to revise the document(s).

Successful written examination will be achieved by approval of **all** documents submitted. All documents must receive a minimum rating of satisfactory to be deemed successful. Failure to achieve approval after **two rounds** will be considered a failure. Failure would thus be grounds for the recommendation that the candidate withdrawal from the PhD in Health program.

Please see PhD Health Comprehensive Exam Guidelines document for further details.

WRITTEN COMPONENT RESULT

PASS	FIRST FAILURE	2ND ATTEMPT	FINAL FAILURE
(Co)Supervisor:	_____	_____	_____
(Co)Supervisor:	_____	_____	_____
Committee Member:	_____	_____	_____
Committee Member:	_____	_____	_____
Committee Member:	_____	_____	_____
Committee Member:	_____	_____	_____
Student:	_____	_____	_____
	Print Name		Signature

NOTE: *All FGS regulations regarding comprehensive examinations as outlined in the Graduate Calendar must be adhered to.*

Once complete, please submit this form to PhDHealth@dal.ca for processing.

Comments:

Post-examination remediation

In the case where responses to questions about one or more documents for the oral examination are judged to not meet the standard, the candidate will be given an opportunity to re-sit the oral exam.

Failure to achieve approval of the oral examination performance in the **two rounds** will be considered a failure. Failure would thus be grounds for the recommendation that the candidate withdrawal from the PhD in Health program.

Please see PhD Health Comprehensive Exam Guidelines document for further details.

ORAL COMPONENT RESULT

PASS FIRST FAILURE 2nd ATTEMPT _____ FINAL FAILURE

(Co)Supervisor:	_____	_____
(Co)Supervisor:	_____	_____
Committee Member:	_____	_____
Student:	_____	_____
	Print Name	Signature

NOTE: All FGS regulations regarding comprehensive examinations as outlined in the Graduate Calendar must be adhered to.

Once complete, please submit this form to PhDHealth@dal.ca for processing.