

De-Mystifying “Paperwork” for Doctoral Exams

Each year, doctoral students, like you, are faced with many to-dos before and after they take their candidacy exams. Following is a helpful step-by-step to get you through the paperwork of your doctoral exam.

Prior to Candidacy Exams

If you are taking your candidacy exams within the next six months:

1. Meet with your advisor to review your doctoral program sheet. All your coursework must be complete by the time you take your candidacy examination. Remember, if you are funded by a GA position, **your funding will not pay for extra courses taken post-candidacy.**
2. Talk to your advisor about the composition of your committee. A candidacy exam committee consists of four faculty: your advisor and three other graduate faculty members.
3. Remember, a candidacy exam consists of a written portion and an oral portion. The exam is designed by your committee to test your knowledge of your major field and allied fields, your capacity for independent research and your ability to write clearly.
4. Meet with your candidacy exam committee to talk about how your exam will be administered, what types of questions you’ll address and how the committee will conduct the oral exam. Some program areas require a meeting with the full committee prior to the exam to develop questions. Check with your advisor to see if you need to schedule this.
5. **IMPORTANT STEP:** You must complete the [Application for Candidacy](#) no later than two weeks prior to your oral exam. Submitting this online form is required prior to the examination. It includes the names of all your committee members. It must be approved by your advisor and the graduate studies chair. Submit it early so your advisor and the graduate studies chair have time to sign it by the deadline.
6. After your Application for Candidacy is submitted, the Graduate School will review your committee. Once approved, your advisor and the committee will receive emails that direct them to the forms used to assess your exam.

After Successfully Completing Candidacy Exams

1. If you are a graduate associate, let human resources know when you have successfully completed your exam. HR will verify you completed the exam with Student Services. Successfully completing your exam makes you eligible for a small pay increase beginning the following semester. Remember to contact HR for the specific start date of your pay raise.
2. Form your dissertation committee. This committee has a minimum of three graduate faculty members – your advisor and two others. Often, but not always, your committee members are three of the four members who served on your candidacy committee.
3. Work on your dissertation proposal and present it to your committee for approval. Most of our programs require a committee meeting with you to review the proposal. Complete

the [dissertation proposal approval form](#) prior to this meeting. You also should note the approval and have the committee sign your Degree Program Sheet and Annual Review form.

4. Discuss, with your advisor, what is involved in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Be sure you follow through on all the steps required.

Getting Ready to Graduate

1. Determine the semester you will be ready to graduate and sit for your final oral exam with your advisor.
2. [Apply to graduate](#) by the [deadline](#) – usually no later than the third week of the term you plan to graduate. Your advisor and the graduate studies committee chair will approve your application.
 - a. PhD and EdD students should have turned in their program sheet prior to his or her candidacy exam annually. If you have not done so, please have your program sheet reviewed at least two semesters prior to graduation.
 - b. Make sure when you fill out your application to graduate that the advisor whose name you enter matches the advisor whose name shows up on the online form. If there is a discrepancy, please contact Student Services at (614) 688-4007 or EdStudies@osu.edu.
 - c. Do NOT check the box “End of Semester” graduation if your intent is to graduate on time. If something happens and you cannot complete your requirements for graduation, we will ask the Graduate School to change your status at that time. Checking this box when you plan to graduate on time can cause problems with your application.

Your Final Oral Exam

1. Before you can schedule your final oral exam, you must have your written dissertation complete. Your draft must be complete so it can be read and reviewed by your committee and a format review can be completed by the Graduate School. Before your committee can approve your [Application for the Final Oral Exam](#) (available at) they must read the dissertation. By signing the form, they are verifying your draft is a defensible document.
2. Determine a date for your final oral exam. Once that date has been chosen, work backward to determine the date you must submit your final dissertation draft for review. There are several important items to keep in mind:
 - a. Schedule a room for your exam. Contact the department chair’s office to reserve a room.
 - b. Determine if you will need to videoconference the exam if a member of your committee is out of town. Rules governing videoconferencing are available in [Appendix B of the Graduate School Handbook](#). Use the Committee and Examination Petition form for this request.
 - c. Make sure the committee gets your dissertation early enough to review so they can approve your dissertation draft and the scheduling of your final exam. The Application for Final Oral Exam must be submitted by the student **and** approved by the exam committee **no later than two weeks prior to the defense date**.

- Remember, your committee WILL NOT APPROVE the scheduling of your exam if your draft is not a defensible document.
- d. Prepare for the oral exam – and relax!
 - e. Forms will be available online for your advisor and committee to sign after your oral examination and after your dissertation has been revised for the final time.

After the Exam:

1. The Graduate School provides [step-by-step procedures](#) for your final semester.
2. A [doctoral checklist](#) will help you determine if you have completed everything to graduate.

If you have any questions, please contact the Student Services Office at (614) 688-4007 or EdStudies@osu.edu.