

Welcome to
**GRAD-YOUR-
LUNCH**

Comprehensive
exams for PhD
students

UBC Forestry

Grad Student Services

GRAD-YOUR-LUNCH!



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Forestry

Place is important



UBC Point Grey Campus (Vancouver) sits on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People.

Musqueam post artist: Brent Sparrow Jr



Path from proposal, to comp, to Candidacy

1. **Resources** Review GradBook | [link](#) – page 30-35
2. **Proposal** Close to final draft or approved proposal
3. **Pre-Comp** 2-3 months prior to comp exam
4. **Comp Exam** Part 1 – **Prep** | Part 2 - **Exam**
5. **Advancement to Candidacy**



PURPOSE OF COMPS

The Comprehensive Examination is intended to test the student's understanding of the chosen field of study as a whole and the student's preparation for the thesis research to follow.

This examination is not a defense of the research proposal and is not intended to query the specifics of the proposed research.

The examination is to determine if the student has acquired:

- the basic core of knowledge of their discipline,
- a thorough understanding of their research area, and,
- the specialized skills required for the research project and for the analysis and interpretation of the results.

It is expected at this stage in their program that students will be able to synthesize and conceptualize, and have attained a scholarly breadth and thoughtfulness that will allow them to handle appropriate questions that may not have been put to them before. The examination should forecast the student's ability to think independently and to perform independent, creative research.

From Gradbook page 30



PROPOSAL

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

The candidate is expected to review the literature and develop research questions and methodologies to be used in subsequent research carried out for the dissertation requirement of the PhD degree.

*Develop proposal in consultation with your supervisor. Contents of the proposal and the proposed research should be discussed at a committee meeting (discussion, **not** an examination). Committee to make a decision whether the proposed thesis is feasible and is appropriate for doctoral research.*

From Gradbook page 30

- **STUDENT** | communicate with supervisor / discuss expectations + timing
- **SUPERVISOR** | should approve draft prior to sending to committee (min 2-3 weeks in advance of a committee meeting – **not** exam)
- **GRAD OFFICE** | no direct involvement at this stage



PRE-COMP

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

At least 2-3 months prior to the examination, it is required that the student and Supervisor schedule a pre-comprehensive meeting with the Associate Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (Shannon) to discuss examination format, student's preparation plan, status of the research proposal, choice of Non-departmental Examiner (NDE), and any other concerns or questions the student may have.

FORMAT | 30 minutes, in person, student, supervisor, ADG+PS

From Gradbook page 31

- **STUDENT/SUPERVISOR** | email erica.triggs@ubc.ca to request a pre-comp meeting
- **GRAD OFFICE** | will offer times for ADG+PS availability



COMP EXAM PART 1 PREP

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

SCOPE | Before the exam, the Examination Committee defines (to student) areas and scope of questioning. Each member of the Committee will cover an area of questioning and will define the limits of that area.

PROPOSAL STATUS | Students must have a draft research proposal and distributed it to their Supervisory committee before taking the Comprehensive Exam. The proposal does not have to be approved by the Supervisory committee prior to the exam, but should be in a sufficient state that the examining committee will be able to understand the student's areas of general and specific interest.

From Gradbook page 31

- **STUDENT/SUPERVISOR** | email erica.triggs@ubc.ca to request a comp exam date + time
- **GRAD OFFICE** | secures chair, confirm format of exam (in person/via Zoom)



COMP EXAM PART 1 PREP - NDE

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

***Who can be my NDE?** | The NDE must be from a Faculty of Forestry department outside of the Supervisor's, or from another UBC department, and is normally a member of G+PS. The NDE should have expertise in the student's area of research or a related field, but must have an arm's-length relationship with the student. In cases where all members other than the supervisor are from another faculty/department, the NDE may be selected from the same department as the supervisor, if approved by the Associate Dean.*

If the student and supervisor are unable to find a suitable NDE from within UBC, exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis where the following conditions are met:

- *Expertise in the student's area of research*
- *"Arm's Length" relationship with student (e.g. sufficiently distant)*
- *"Arm's Length" relationship with supervisor (lack of research collaboration, co-authorship, mentoring, teaching)*

From Gradbook page 33



NDE “Arm’s Length”

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

G+PS GUIDELINES | [LINK](#)

FRST NDE policy aligns with Doc Exam requirements

The “Arm’s Length” policy is in place to avoid any potential conflicts of interest that could result in an a biased examination.

What is considered “Arm’s Length”

A person is ineligible to serve as External Examiner if, with respect to the Candidate or any member of the Candidate’s Supervisory Committee, if they are:

- a close friend or relative; or
- a research collaborator and/or co-author within the past 6 years; or
- an institutional colleague within the past 6 years; or
- a former supervisor (for the Candidate, Supervisor or Co-Supervisor only); or
- a person who has offered future employment or mentorship to the Candidate; or
- a former student; or
- involved in a dispute; or
- involved in a partnership.



COMP EXAM PART 2 EXAM

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

FORMAT (2.5 HRS) | *The comprehensive is an **oral examination**. A combination of written and oral may be possible but must be approved by the Associate Dean at the time of the pre-comprehensive meeting*

EXAM COMMITTEE | *Quorum for examination consists of the Examination Chairperson, a Non-departmental Examiner, and at least two members of the supervisory committee (including the Chair and the Research Supervisor). Preference is that all members of the supervisory committee attend.*

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- **STUDENT & SUPERVISOR** | responsible for securing a time with committee & NDE, confirming in person or on Zoom
- **GRAD OFFICE** | will send calendar invitation & support docs, approx. 10 days prior to exam



COMP EXAM | FORMAT | 2.5 HRS

1. Chair – brief introduction
2. Student – brief (usually 10 minute) talk / presentation on research area + project. *This presentation is not meant to be a discussion of the methodology in the proposal, which should be discussed in regular committee meetings separate from the exam.*
3. Committee members – 12-15 minutes to pose questions (ending with supervisor(s) and chair)
4. Questions – 2nd round (not to exceed 5 minutes per examiner)
5. Deliberation (student leaves room) / evaluation of student performance – presentation, oral responses, etc.
6. Recall student – announce committee's recommendation – pass, adjourn, or fail (*GradBook page 34*)



ATC

PRACTICAL TIPS + GUIDANCE

DEADLINES | *PhD students should Advance to Candidacy within 24 months of initial enrolment (MSc start date if transferred to PhD). G+PS final deadline is 36 months.*

Advancement to Candidacy Requirements

- *Completed all required coursework*
- *Thesis proposal approved by all members of supervisory committee*
- *Passed comprehensive exam*

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- **GRAD OFFICE** | will send [ATC forms](#) for signatures once all above requirements are met





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Forestry

Thank you + time for questions

**Next session:
Thursday February 15
G+PS Programs & Resources**

<https://forestry.ubc.ca/programs/graduate/>

FIND US ON:

