



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Education

EDUCATION.USASK.CA

Cross-Departmental PhD in Education

Graduate Student Handbook

2025-2026



Section 1: Welcome to the College of Education

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The College of Education fosters innovation and collaboration through teaching, learning, discovery, and transformative pedagogy.

Through working together, we impact the development of teachers and learners who are committed to advancing the growth of students and communities, and to building a positive foundation for a stronger and healthier future.

Vision

We embrace Indigenization and reconciliation, recognizing the diversity of values and perspectives, of all peoples. We endeavor to expand upon pedagogical practices that acknowledge and make space for the cultural and linguistic diversity of our province. We strive to be leaders of effective and innovative pedagogy, of curiosity-based research work, scholarly work, and artistic work, and of practice that has a sustainable impact locally, nationally, and internationally. We respond actively and collaboratively to emergent provincial, national, and international priorities, including those of the university, school divisions, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and the Ministry of Education.

Values

We champion:

- Academic Freedom
- Collaboration
- Collegiality
- Curiosity-based Research
- Equity
- Inclusivity
- Mental and physical health
- Pedagogical Excellence
- Professionalism
- Promotion of Well-Being
- Reconciliation

We Demonstrate:

- Accountability
- Civility and Respect
- Equality
- Humility
- Impactful research, artistic and scholarly work
- Integrity
- Transparency

We embrace:

- Community Engagement
- Diversity
- Imagination
- Indigenous Knowledges
- Socio-ecological Justice
- Wisdom

Message from the Dean, College of Education

I would like to extend a warm welcome as you begin your study and research journey in the Cross-Departmental PhD program in the College of Education. I am delighted to see such a vibrant and talented group of doctoral students from Canada and around the world joining in 2025-2026.

The College of Education fosters innovation and collaboration through teaching, learning, discovery, and transformative pedagogy. In partnership, we impact the development of teachers and learners who are committed to advancing the growth of students and communities, and to building a positive foundation for a stronger, healthier, and sustainable future.

During your time as a PhD student, you will engage in rigorous and innovative research and have opportunities to explore interdisciplinary avenues in education. You will be supported by national and internationally recognized faculty leaders, professional and dedicated staff, the Education Graduate Student Association (EGSA), and your fellow students. We all work together to create a supportive, uplifting community so graduate students can thrive in their academic and professional pursuits.

I wish you a positive learning and research experience ahead. Once again, welcome to the College of Education Cross-Departmental PhD program.

Dr. Julia Paulson, PhD



Message from the Associate Dean, Research, Graduate Support, and International Initiatives

Welcome to the College of Education Cross Departmental PhD program. Enrolling in this program means that you are a student of the University of Saskatchewan's College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) and a member of Education's Cross Departmental program.

The investment of your valuable time and energy in this program will support your personal and professional growth and will lead to deeper understandings of education locally and globally. We believe that, through our program here in the College, you will develop enhanced knowledge and academic skills that will prepare you to be an important contributor to the future of education. We encourage you to develop networks of peers and to work closely with faculty in our academic community as you pursue your doctoral degree; these relationships are very helpful for your time as a doctoral student and beyond. This handbook also serves as an essential resource for you for understanding the policies, guidelines and procedures that inform the steps of your academic journey.

Dr. Vicki Squires, PhD



SECTION 2: Graduate Contacts

Cross-departmental PhD Graduate Chairs/Program Directors

The graduate chair is important to ensure the success of graduate students within the College of Education. Responsibilities of the graduate chair include selection and admission of graduate students, administration of the graduate program, scholarships and awards, and meeting with students to ensure they have ongoing supervision.

Graduate Chairs/Program Directors:

Curriculum Studies:

Dr. Lori McKee, Graduate Chair – lori.mckee@usask.ca

Educational Foundations:

Dr. Lynn Lemisko, Graduate Chair - lynn.lemisko@usask.ca

Educational Psychology and Special Education:

Dr. Laureen McIntyre, Graduate Chair – laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL):

Dr. Melanie Hamilton, SoTL Director – melanie.hamilton@usask.ca

Dr. Vicki Squires – vicki.squires@usask.ca

Cross-departmental PhD Graduate Administrative Support

The graduate administrators work in partnership with faculty and students to promote student success. They liaise with the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office to ensure policy and procedures are being followed to ensure student success.

Graduate Administrators:

Curriculum Studies:

Patricia Gillies - patricia.gillies@usask.ca

Educational Foundations:

Charmaine Spezowka – efdt.gradsecretary@usask.ca

Educational Psychology & Special Education:

Charmaine Spezowka – epse.gradsec@usask.ca

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL):

Alison Kraft – sotl@usask.ca

General Inquiries

edgrad.inquiries@usask.ca

International Students and Immigration Advising

If you are an international student in Canada, it is your responsibility to ensure that you meet all immigration requirements. Failing to maintain a valid immigration status may cause serious delays in your program and create issues with your ability to stay in Canada as a student.

Regulated International Student Immigration Advisors (RISIAs) are available to help you through the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) and within the College of Education. Megan Fillatre is a licensed RISIA and the designated student immigration contact for the College of Education — you can reach her at megan.fillatre@usask.ca.

If you have any questions about immigration matters, it is strongly recommended that you contact Megan or ISSAC to consult with a licensed advisor. Only RISIA's are trained and legally authorized to provide immigration guidance to international students on campus. RISIAs can advise you on Study Permits, Visas, and how your Study Permit may relate to other Canadian immigration programs.

- **Megan Fillatre (Education)** offers drop-in immigration advising and one-on-one meetings to College of Education international students. For details, visit: [Graduate Student Immigration Advising - College of Education | University of Saskatchewan](#) or contact megan.fillatre@usask.ca
- **International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC)**
Webpage: <https://students.usask.ca/international/issac.php>
Email: international.students@usask.ca
ISSAC Immigration Handbook: <https://students.usask.ca/international/immigration.php>
ISSAC Immigration Advising: <https://students.usask.ca/international/international-student-advising.php#Immigrationadvising>

SECTION 3: Student Services, Funding and Estimated Program Costs

Education Graduate Student Association (EGSA)

The Education Graduate Student Association (EGSA) represents, supports, and advocates for the academic and non-academic interests and needs of graduate students in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan (USask). To learn more about the EGSA and to get to know your 2024-2025 Executives, please visit:

<https://educationtest.usask.ca/people/student-communities/education-graduate-society.php>

International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC)

The International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) is a central support unit and a campus partner for all students, staff, and faculty. ISSAC is dedicated to fostering a welcoming, globally aware, and inclusive campus community.

<https://students.usask.ca/international/issac.php>

Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning (GMCTL)

The Gwenna Moss Centre supports teaching and learning through a variety of events, workshops, and ongoing programs.

<https://teaching.usask.ca/about/units/gwenna-moss-centre-for-teaching-and-learning.php>

Access and Equity Services (AES)

Access and Equity Services, formerly Disability Services for Students (DSS), is guided by Saskatchewan's Human Rights legislation and the duty to accommodate individuals requiring accommodations based on disability, religion, family status, and gender identity.

<https://students.usask.ca/health/centres/access-equity-services.php>

Online learning resources

Training and Development

This eLearning portal is available to help students identify skills that require mastery and provides the necessary resources: <https://paws2.usask.ca/training>

Remote Learning Readiness Tutorial

Tutorial to help better understand the skills associated with remote learning success and help you make the most of remote learning:

https://libguides.usask.ca/remote_learning

University Library

The University Library's goal is to advance learning, research, and collaborations across our diverse community through the unique combination of academic support services, inclusive spaces, and relevant and distinctive collections.

<https://library.usask.ca/education/#gsc.tab=0>

The Grad HUB (CGPS)

The go-to online resource for understanding and planning your graduate journey. The Grad Hub was created *by graduate students and for graduate students* as the go-to place to find relevant information whenever they need it. <https://cgps.usask.ca/onboarding/index.php>

Graduate Student Funding Opportunities

Important note: Student funding is not guaranteed, and each Cross-Departmental PhD student is expected to cover the costs of their PhD program, including but not limited to, [tuition](#), [student fees](#) and [living expenses](#) (see table below, under Overall Program Costs). Students are encouraged to investigate all options for funding through a combination of teaching, research, student assistantships, scholarships, and awards.

College of Education — Through the Office of the Associate Dean (Research, Graduate Support, and International Initiatives), scholarships and bursaries are available to graduate students in the College of Education on a competitive basis and with an application deadline of November 1 of each calendar year.

<https://education.usask.ca/academics/awards/college-of-education-awards.php#GraduateFundingOpportunities>

Graduate Awards — Find scholarships and awards relevant to graduate students using USask's scholarships and awards database. You will find information on eligibility, deadlines and how to apply <https://students.usask.ca/money/awards/graduate-awards.php> / <https://grad.usask.ca/funding/scholarships.php#Programspecificfunding>

External Financial Support — Awards administered by the University of Saskatchewan are not the only awards available to students studying at the U of S. Students are encouraged to look for awards from other sources, such as clubs and associations. External awards are offered by agencies, governments, or other organizations outside USask.

<https://students.usask.ca/money/awards/external.php>

Important Dates

Academic Calendar 2024-2025:

<https://students.usask.ca/academic-calendar/>

Tuition payment and due dates:

<https://students.usask.ca/money/tuition-fees/pay.php>

Tuition and Student Fees

Doctoral students pay tuition three times a year for as long as they are enrolled in their program. Both international and domestic PhD students pay the same tuition amount. In addition to tuition, students also pay fees for programs like health and dental insurance, a bus pass, and other campus services.

<https://grad.usask.ca/programs/education.php#Tuitionandfunding>

Estimated Program Costs

PhD in Education (Cross-Departmental)

Tuition and student fees (one year)

Tuition	\$5,436 CAD (\$1,812/term)
Student Fees	\$1,456.68 CAD
Accommodation	\$26,400 CAD
TOTAL ESTIMATE	\$33,292 - \$40,000 CAD

The tuition amount listed is an estimate based on 2025/26 rates and is subject to change. Tuition rates are typically approved in March of each year for the following September. For up-to-date tuition rates:

<https://students.usask.ca/money/tuition-fees/graduate-tuition.php>

Accommodation expenses are based on 'off-campus' housing for one person at a rate of \$2,200/month.

This is a **rough estimate** based on one year in the program, for one person. Costs could be higher, depending on the individual's cost of living, amenities, food, and other factors.

SECTION 4: Program Information

Cross-Departmental Program

The Departments of Curriculum Studies, Educational Foundations, Educational Psychology and Special Education, and the Centre for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) support doctoral studies through the cross-departmental Ph.D. in Education. This is a thesis-based research program, and graduates may have goals of obtaining academic positions at other institutions and conducting education research for government, school divisions, First Nations and other research organizations. The program delivery is intended to be flexible with decisions on program delivery and specific program requirements decided by the student's advisory committee.

Registration Policy

All graduate students will maintain continuous registration throughout their program. PhD students must register in **ERES 996** each academic term throughout the program; September-December, January-April, May-August. PhD students shall be considered full-time for every term for the duration of their programs. There is no part-time option for the PhD program.

Course Requirements

All Cross Departmental Ph.D. students are required to complete a total of 15 credit units of courses.

- 9 required credit units in Educational Research, generally selected from existing advanced ERES or SoTL courses in the College of Education, such as:
 - o ERES 845 Qualitative Research Methods
 - o ERES 810 Indigenous Research Epistemology and Methods
 - o ERES 820 Action Research in Education
 - o SoTL 801 Research Methods in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
 - o SoTL 804 Research Experience in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- 6 credit units of electives approved by the student's supervisor and advisory committee.

Students must be registered in **ERES 996 each term**, throughout their PhD program.

Additional classes may be taken if recommended or approved by the student's supervisor and advisory committee.

ERES 990 Seminar

In ERES 990, doctoral students will develop an understanding of, and ability to apply, research scholarship and methodology in the field of Education.

This non-credit 990 seminar is required to be completed by all cross-departmental PhD students in the first year of their program.

***For new students entering the PhD program in 2025-26, ERES 990 is offered in Fall 2025 by Dr. Laureen McIntyre. This course should be taken in the first term of your PhD program. To register for the Fall 2025 ERES 990, the CRN is 86153.**

Grades Required to Pass

The standards below are the minimum acceptable grades for passing a course.

	PhD
Undergraduate class	None allowed
Graduate class	70%
Cumulative overall average needed	70%

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan belong to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) and will follow all CGPS Policies: <https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/index.php>

Ethics and Integrity Training

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/Coursework.php#52ETHICSCOURSE>

All Cross Departmental PhD graduate students are required to complete the following zero credit ethics modules, in accordance to CGPS policy:

- GPS 960 – Introduction to Ethics and Integrity;
- GPS 961 – Ethics and Integrity in Human Research, if research involves human subjects.

Previous credit for these ethics' courses from a University of Saskatchewan master's program will satisfy the PhD program requirement.

Academic Integrity

While every University of Saskatchewan college and discipline contributes to the academic community differently, they all share the same set of values for academic integrity. These values are echoed in our Learning Charter and include:

- Being able to locate, understand, evaluate and use information effectively, ethically, legally, and with cultural appropriateness.
- Developing and applying appropriate skills of research, inquiry, and knowledge creation and translation.
- Embracing responsibilities to oneself and others in ways that are authentic and meaningful.

Visit USask's academic integrity [webpage](#) and become more familiar by taking the Academic Integrity [tutorial](#) (optional). Student are encouraged to also review the USask GenAI and importance of student responsibility to maintain academic integrity when using it or not: <https://academic-integrity.usask.ca/gen-ai.php>

Transfer Credits

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/Coursework.php#55TRANSFERCOURSECREDIT>

Students may take courses from other institutions, through the Western Canadian Deans of Graduate Studies of Canada (WCDGS) Agreement ([CGPS link](#)), to be used toward course requirements in their program of studies. A maximum of 6 credit units can be transferred to the Cross Departmental PhD program.

Full documentation of the course(s) must be provided to the graduate chair and graduate administrator in advance of the term of intended enrolment, to ensure transfer credit is approved. The student must maintain registration at the University of Saskatchewan during the term of absence.

Work already applied toward another degree will not be accepted for credit.

Transfer Credit Process:

- The student requests transfer credit from their supervisor.
- If the supervisor approves, the student submits the request for transfer credit along with the course syllabi to the Graduate Administrator.
- The Graduate Administrator submits the request to the Graduate Chair who will request faculty consultation in review of the course for credit.
- If the Graduate Chair agrees to grant credit, a request will be made to CGPS for approval.

Timeline for Completion

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/program-progression.php#43TIMEINPROGRAM#43TIMEINPROGRAM>

Time in the program is measured from the first term of the first course taken toward the program. This may be coursework done at USask or elsewhere approved for transfer credit. Any periods of approved leave or suspension are excluded from time in the program.

PhD students have a maximum of 6 years to complete from the start of their program.

Leaves of Absences

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/leaves-accommodations/Accommodations-and-Supports.php#131LEAVESOFABSENCE>

Leaves of absence are available to students under the following categories: *Personal or health; maternity/parental; professional; and leave to pursue an additional program of study.*

The leave period is not included in the time period for completion of the degree, and tuition is not assessed during the leave. Nominal student fees are assessed during the leave period. While a student is on leave, all supervisory processes and progress on academic and research work are paused. Unless otherwise permitted by the source of funding, the financial support offered to a full-time, fully qualified student is paused and therefore not available to a student during the time they are on leave. All leave requests should be discussed with the student's supervisor, then appropriate documentation should be forwarded to the graduate administrator for processing.

Personal or Health Leaves – A graduate student experiencing health-related or personal circumstances that are significantly affecting their ability to make academic progress in their program of study may be eligible for a personal or health leave. Requests for a personal or health leave must be submitted by the student for review and approval by their academic unit. The Graduate Chair, Head, or Dean has the authority to approve personal or health leave requests for up to 12 months taken consecutively or in non-consecutive terms.

*Where additional time is required, not exceeding up to an additional 12 months taken consecutively or in non-consecutive terms, requests must be submitted to the CGPS for review and approval.

Maternity, Adopting, Parenting Leave – A graduate student who is bearing a child, and/or who has primary responsibility for the care of a child immediately following a birth or an adoption is eligible for parental leave. Please see the [CGPS policy](#) for details about leave duration and requirements.

Leave to pursue an additional program of study – With support from your academic unit, a graduate student that has been offered admission to pursue an additional program of study at the University of Saskatchewan or other post-secondary institution (nationally or abroad), and who would like to pause their graduate program, may apply for a leave of absence. Requests for leave to pursue an additional program of study must be submitted by the graduate student, with the support of the

academic unit, to the CGPS for review and approval. A plan and timeline to completion for the student's graduate program that has been approved by the student's supervisor and the Graduate Chair, Head, or Dean must be included with the leave request. Support of the leave request from the academic unit will not guarantee CGPS approval of the leave to pursue an additional program of study.

*Leaves to pursue an additional program of study will not typically exceed two consecutive academic terms per academic year.

Professional Leave – A professional leave supports graduate students who engage in relevant work or professional development opportunities. A professional leave can be approved by the student's academic unit for up to a maximum of 12 months taken consecutively or in non-consecutive terms.

*Where additional time is required, requests must be submitted to the CGPS for review and approval. Requests for additional time beyond the 12 months must include a rationale and any relevant supporting documents and must be supported by the supervisor and Graduate Chair, Head, or Dean.

Student Vacation

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/leaves-accommodations/Accommodations-and-Supports.php#133STUDENTVACATION>

Graduate students are entitled to a minimum of two weeks of vacation per year, in addition to weekend, statutory holidays and regularly scheduled university closures. Vacation should be scheduled at a time that is mutually convenient to the student and their supervisor.

Withdrawals

Withdrawal from courses:

Before withdrawing from a course, students should discuss their intentions with their course instructor and/or their supervisor.

Please check registration deadlines: <https://students.usask.ca/academics/deadlines.php#Standardtermschedule>. Withdrawals from courses after the add/drop deadline, but prior to or on the day of the withdraw deadline, are assigned a grade of withdrawal (W). Withdrawing from a course after the withdrawal deadline will result in a failing grade. Requests to repeat a course must be made in writing to the graduate chair.

Withdrawal from program:

Students are encouraged to have a discussion with their supervisor or graduate chair before proceeding to withdraw from the program. To withdraw from the program, students must complete the Notice of Withdrawal from Graduate Program: [Sign in - University of Saskatchewan](#) Please include your graduate administrators name on this form so that they may be informed of the withdrawal.

Graduation

To graduate, students must pass all required courses with a combined minimum weighted average of 70%. In calculated weighted averages the grades in all courses will be used (excluding transfer credit courses from other institutions).

In the last term of their program, students must complete an online application to graduate. Complete the application for spring convocation on or before **March 31**; and for fall convocation on or before **August 31**. Late applications to graduate are not accepted.

PhD students must have defended their thesis, completed all the required forms and submitted their thesis to the University of Saskatchewan Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD) site before the deadline to register for the upcoming term.

All information about the ceremony will be sent to students through their PAWS email account. Students are asked to order tickets through PAWS. Information about convocation ceremonies including gown rental, photography and tickets is available at: <https://students.usask.ca/academics/graduation.php>

SECTION 5: Supervisor and Advisory Committee

PhD Advisory Committee

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/supervision.php#31ADVISORYCOMMITTEE>

Advisory Committee changes as of January 2022:

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-sub/advisory-and-defence-changes.php> Policy in effect for all students beginning their program May 1, 2022, onward.

The Ph.D. advisory committee consists of at least three members:

Supervisor

A member of the faculty of the CGPS (Adjunct Professors can supervise, but Professional Affiliates cannot). The Supervisor typically chairs meetings of the advisory committee.

Applicants are required to identify at least one preferred supervisor at the application stage. If admitted to the program, a supervisor will be determined at the outset of the PhD program. The supervisor should be free of any conflicts of interest with the student. Should any conflicts of interest emerge they should be disclosed and managed accordingly (see [CGPS policy 14.2](#)).

Additional Member:

This is a member of CGPS faculty, including Adjunct Professors. A Professional Affiliate or someone approved for one-time membership by CGPS can also serve in this role. The list of regular faculty, adjuncts, and professional affiliates can be accessed in PAWS.

Cognate Member

The cognate member is a member of CGPS faculty. This includes Adjunct Professors. It does not include Professional Affiliates. The cognate member is from a different principal academic unit than the student and supervisor. Associate faculty members holding a secondary appointment in the unit are eligible, for example, to serve as the cognate member.

Co-Supervisor

A Co-supervisor may be included **if applicable**. Co-supervisors share a vote in decision-making and essentially count as one member. A Professional Affiliate or someone approved for one-time membership by CGPS may serve as a co-supervisor, with permission from CGPS.

Supervisors are responsible for arranging regular meetings with their students each academic year. The student advisory committee will meet once per year to complete a yearly progress report, and when a meeting is required for the purposes of the qualifying exam, candidacy assessment, and final dissertation defence. These meetings will be arranged by the graduate student supervisor.

Student-Supervisor Agreement

<https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/supervision.php#34STUDENTSUPERVISORAGREEMENT>

Students enrolled in the PhD program will complete a CGPS Student-Supervisor Agreement in partnership with their supervisor (template available [here](#)). The agreement must be completed within the first twelve months of the student's program and will be treated as a non-course requirement.

When the CGPS Student-Supervisor Agreement has been completed and signed by the supervisor and student, it should be submitted to the Graduate Administrator in the academic unit. The Graduate Administrator will keep a copy in the academic unit and submit a copy to CGPS.

SECTION 6: Doctoral Qualifying Examination

The thesis examination for the award of a master's degree, may, at the discretion of the student's advisory committee be accepted in lieu of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Qualifying Examination. However, students admitted to the College of Education, Cross-Departmental PhD program who completed a *course-based*, or *project* master's degree program (i.e., they did not complete and defend a thesis as part of their master's degree program) may be required to complete the Qualifying Examination. The structure of the Qualifying Examination will be determined by the supervisor and advisory committee.

SECTION 7 Doctoral Candidacy Assessment

In November 2023, the CGPS Faculty Council approved reframing the requirement for a comprehensive examination to the requirement for a Doctoral Candidacy Assessment. This policy change came into effect on May 1, 2024.

The Cross Departmental PhD Candidacy Assessment Guidelines are included as Appendix A in this handbook.

The candidacy assessment is to be completed within 24 months from the start of the PhD program to move from a PhD student to a PhD candidate. It will occur following the completion of all for credit course and ethics training requirements.

The purpose of the candidacy assessment is for doctoral students to demonstrate that they have:

- an adequate grasp of the current state of knowledge in the intended field of research;
- the potential ability to conduct advanced original research independently using relevant methodologies;
- the ability to communicate in ways appropriate to their field of research and practice (and, if applicable, other knowledge or skill requirements for the discipline).

Ethics Approval for Research

Ethics approval is required for all research conducted that includes human participants. The student completes the ethics forms accessible through the Research Ethics website that are relevant to their study and data collection: <https://research.usask.ca/rei/researchers/ethics/human-ethics.php>.

In consultation, and with approval of the supervisor, the student submits the ethics application to the Research Ethics Office. Typically, the ethics application is submitted after the Doctoral Candidacy Assessment is successfully completed and approved by the student's supervisor and committee. However, if the supervisor believes the research design and proposal is clear and sound, ethics could be submitted prior to successful defense. This option is considered given the lengthy timeframe to process ethics applications. Once the student receives the Certificate of Approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board, they can begin their data collection. As the student nears completion of the final document, the supervisor, in conjunction with the student and the committee, begin setting up the final defence.

Section 8: Final Defence and Dissertation Examining Committee

Final defence and dissertation examining committee will be in alignment with CGPS policy <https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/Academics/defence.php#83SCHEDULINGTHEORALEXAMINATION>

Changes approved by CGPS Council as summarized at [Advisory & Defence Changes - College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies - | University of Saskatchewan \(usask.ca\)](#)

Final Defence

The student will provide an electronic copy of the draft of their final dissertation document to each member of the advisory committee.

The advisory committee will have up to 6 weeks to review the document. The members will each review the document and provide feedback to the supervisor regarding the readiness of the document for moving forward to final defense. The feedback may be gathered at a meeting of the committee or may be provided electronically. Committee members may request revisions or suggest edits that should be completed before going to final defense.

The student will have 3 weeks to complete the required revisions and provide a final copy of the draft dissertation document to the advisory committee.

The format of the final defence follows that of the proposal defence with a presentation followed by rounds of questions. Upon completion of the questions, the student leaves the room and the committee deliberates on whether or not to approve the draft dissertation document. If consensus cannot be reached, the committee will arrive at a decision through majority vote. All CGPS policies will be followed. The extent and type of revisions to be undertaken will also be decided upon by committee. Once the decision has been made, the student will be asked to rejoin the meeting, and the decision will be communicated.

Final Defence Forms

At the time of final defence, the student and committee are given forms to complete. The student will make any necessary changes to the dissertation suggested by the committee. If the supervisor is satisfied with the revisions, they will contact the graduate chair for the paperwork to be signed and forwarded to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The student will then upload their dissertation to the University Library Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD) site and apply to graduate through their PAWS (*see Graduation, page 9*).

Note: Students who defend their thesis prior to the end of a term may be eligible for a tuition refund. Tuition refunds are pro-rated monthly. Credits will be returned to the method in which the student used to pay their tuition (cash or cheque payments will show as a credit on the students account).

All requirements must be completed (defence paperwork and uploading thesis to ETD site) prior to the end of a month in order to be eligible for a tuition refund for the remaining months of that term.

Example: Student A defends on July 6, completes all their revisions and uploads their thesis to the ETD site on July 25. Graduate Chair collects all signatures on the paperwork and submits them to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to July 31. Student A will be eligible for a tuition refund for the month of August.

Dissertation Examining Committee

The PhD dissertation examining committee consists of *at least* six members:

Chair (non-voting)

The chair of the examining committee is the Graduate Chair, Head, Dean or designate. The Supervisor (Co-supervisor, if applicable) and other members of the advisory or examining committee may not serve as the chair at the defence. *KEY CHANGE: The Dean's Designate role has been removed and the role of Examining Committee Chair is fulfilled within the academic unit.*

Supervisor (and co-supervisor, if applicable)

Additional member (from advisory committee)

KEY CHANGE: As per advisory committee reduction from two to one additional member.

Cognate member (from advisory committee)

University examiner

Approved by the Graduate Chair, Head, Dean or designate using the criteria below. The university examiner has an “arm’s length” relationship with the PhD dissertation research.

Will:

- Be a member of the faculty of the CGPS (Adjunct Professors included, but cannot be a Professional Affiliate);
- Normally have a Ph.D. degree or equivalent;
- Have suitable knowledge in the general field of dissertation research;
- Ideally, have previous experience supervising or examining doctoral students.

Will not:

- Have been directly involved in the candidate’s Ph.D. dissertation research;
- Have served on the candidate’s Ph.D. advisory committee;
- Be related (e.g., family, partner) to the candidate or supervisor.

May:

- Be from within or outside the academic unit of the candidate and supervisor(s), provided the arm’s length criteria noted above are met;
- Have taught the candidate in classes and interacted in other ways not directly related to the dissertation research.

KEY CHANGE: The University examiner is a new role on the PhD dissertation examining committee as of May 1, 2024.

External examiner

Approved by the Associate Dean, CGPS. The external examiner will have an “arm’s-length” relationship with the student, the supervisor and members of the advisory committee. *KEY CHANGE: While the external examiner still cannot have collaborated with the supervisor or student in scholarly activities during the past 6 years, the restriction no longer applies to the relationship between the external examiner and other members of the advisory/examining committee.*



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Education

EDUCATION.USASK.CA

College of Education Graduate Policies
Cross-Departmental Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
Candidacy Assessment Guidelines

APPENDIX A

PURPOSE:

The College of Education's Cross Departmental Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program's candidacy assessment is used to determine whether a doctoral student has a mature and substantive grasp of the field as a whole and the ability to conduct independent research. This assessment is typically scheduled after the doctoral student has completed all of their course work requirements in their doctoral program and before beginning their doctoral research. The candidacy assessment is a 2.5-3.0-hour **oral examination** comprised of two portions: (1) an oral examination on topics cognate to the doctoral student's field of research, and (2) an oral examination of the doctoral student's approved written dissertation research proposal (i.e., both examinations are completed in the same meeting). A doctoral student passing the candidacy assessment is deemed a Ph.D. candidate ([CGPS policy 6.3.2](#)).

POLICY:

Typically, upon completion of the doctoral student's program course work and prior to the doctoral student and advisory committee determining a mutually agreeable date/time for the candidacy assessment:

1. The advisory committee will meet to discuss the coursework the student has taken and the theoretical and foundational context, methodology, and body of research and literature specific to student's research interest that will be the focus of discussion in the first portion of the candidacy assessment. In this discussion the advisory committee can give the student a list of suggested readings they each feel will help the student to better understand these areas (i.e., readings on theory, methods, literature specific to topic area). The advisory committee will discuss the timeline for the student to review the readings and prepare for the candidacy assessment.
2. A copy of the doctoral student's written dissertation research proposal is to be distributed to the advisory committee members for the committee's assessment. The advisory committee will have two to four weeks to assess the written dissertation proposal. The committee will provide any edits/comments and communicate to the supervisor whether or not they believe the doctoral student is prepared to proceed to the candidacy assessment to have their understanding of the coursework they have completed and the pertinent literature related to their proposed research orally assessed (i.e., theoretical and foundational context, methodology, and body of research and literature specific to their research interest) and orally defend the written dissertation research proposal.



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3. If the advisory committee agrees that the written dissertation research proposal is satisfactory and the doctoral student is prepared to orally defend the proposal and have their background knowledge orally assessed, the next step is the candidacy assessment. If the advisory committee believes that the written dissertation research proposal is not satisfactory, the candidate will have an opportunity to rewrite the written dissertation research proposal before the candidacy assessment is scheduled.
4. Upon agreement by the advisory committee that the doctoral student has successfully completed a final draft of the written dissertation research proposal and the doctoral student, advisory committee, and the supervisor have jointly determined that the doctoral student is ready to undertake their candidacy assessment, the supervisor will notify the department graduate chair of this approaching milestone. A mutually agreeable date/time to schedule the doctoral student's candidacy assessment meeting will be determined.
5. Once a mutually agreeable date/time for the candidacy assessment meeting has been determined, the department graduate chair will inform the doctoral student and advisory committee members by letter/electronic communication (i.e., email) of the date/time for this meeting and provide a copy of the final version of the student's written dissertation research proposal and a copy of the evaluation criteria that will be used to examine the candidate's oral defence and written proposal. In preparation for this meeting, each advisory committee member will generate questions for both portions of the assessment (i.e., questions for two rounds on student's background knowledge and questions for two rounds on their written research proposal).

Oral Examination on Topics Cognate to Doctoral Student's Field of Research

In the first portion of the candidacy assessment, the department graduate chair and the doctoral student's advisory committee will engage in at least two rounds of questioning to assess the doctoral student's understanding of the coursework they have completed and the pertinent literature in the following three areas:

- theoretical and foundational context of their research inquiry;
- methodology appropriate to the research; and
- body of research and literature specific to their research interest.

The oral examination on topics cognate to the doctoral student's field of research is typically approximately 1.0 to 1.5 hours of the 2.5-to-3.0-hour candidacy assessment.



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A successful oral examination will show evidence of the following:

- sufficient knowledge and understanding of the field of study;
- sufficient knowledge and understanding of the appropriate methodologies to undertake the research in the specified field of focus; and
- ability to present and defend material orally.

Oral Defence of Doctoral Student's Approved Written Dissertation Research Proposal In the second portion of the candidacy assessment:

1. The doctoral student will provide an overview of the written dissertation research proposal. The overview will consist of an oral presentation of the proposed doctoral research approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length.
2. The advisory committee will have an opportunity to pose questions in at least two rounds of questioning to the doctoral student regarding the written dissertation research proposal and the oral presentation. The oral defense on the written dissertation research proposal is typically approximately 1.0 to 1.5 hours of the 2.5-to-3.0-hour candidacy assessment.
3. Following the oral presentation and rounds of questions, the advisory committee will deliberate, in-camera, and make a decision regarding the doctoral student's candidacy assessment. Specifically, without the doctoral student present, the advisory committee will decide if the doctoral student has demonstrated sufficient knowledge and understanding of the field of study and appropriate methodologies to undertake the proposed research.

A successful written dissertation proposal will demonstrate:

- strong organizational and written skills;
- ability to construct a sound and coherent argument; and
- sufficient relevant knowledge and understanding of the field of study in each section/chapter of the written dissertation proposal.

A successful oral defense will show evidence of the following:

- sufficient knowledge and understanding of the field of study;
- sufficient knowledge and understanding of the appropriate methodologies to undertake the proposed research; and
- ability to present and defend material orally.



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Outcome

The advisory committee members must PASS the doctoral student on the oral examination on topics cognate to the doctoral student's field of research and the doctoral student's written dissertation research proposal in order to move forward. It is understood that the successful completion of the two portions of the candidacy assessment (i.e., the oral examination exam on topics cognate to the doctoral student's field of research, and the oral examination of the doctoral student's approved written dissertation research proposal) will demonstrate that the doctoral student has the background knowledge of the field of study and mastery of methodologies necessary to undertake successful doctoral research and will be deemed a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) candidate.

If a doctoral student does not PASS one or both of the portions of the candidacy assessment:

1. The doctoral student is permitted a second attempt at the recommendation of the academic unit and with the permission of the Dean of College of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies (CGPS) or designate. The second attempt should be scheduled from one to three months from the date of the first assessment.
2. A second unsatisfactory outcome will automatically result in a requirement to discontinue from that doctoral program.
3. An unsatisfactory candidacy assessment, and/or the denial of a second attempt at the candidacy assessment, may be appealed to the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee of CGPS on substantive grounds in accordance with Part IV of the University Council's *Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters*, or on grounds other than substantive academic judgment limited to those outlined in Part V.B.1.