

**SPROTT SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
CARLETON UNIVERSITY**

**PhD Comprehensive Examination Procedures and Approval Form  
(Classic Version)**

***Overview:***

The comprehensive examination provides the opportunity for Ph.D. candidates to demonstrate key capabilities needed to successfully undertake a dissertation in line with the goals of the program. The successful completion of the comprehensive signals readiness to proceed to the dissertation. Through the comprehensive examination process, the candidate demonstrates the ability to critically master the literature in a specific topic area with interdisciplinary concern and managerial application outcomes. The comprehensive requires the preparation and oral defense of a written essay which critically and analytically reviews the literature proposing directions for further research and applications for practitioners.

Since this comprehensive is an examination, it is appropriate for the student to ask for advice on general issues pertaining to content and structure, but it is not appropriate for faculty to review drafts of the comprehensive exam and offer suggestions as we do in assisting students in the preparation of their theses. Students should be able to demonstrate they are able to work on their own.

***Procedure:***

By the start of the 6<sup>th</sup> term (full-time students), and by the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> term (part-time students); and upon the completion of all required coursework, doctoral students must indicate their intention to prepare for the comprehensive examination by registering in the course (BUSI 6908) and informing the PhD Director and potential supervisor/mentor.

Together, the director, supervisor/mentor, and student will discuss possible topics and potential committee members. A comprehensive examination committee must be comprised of a minimum of 3 faculty members from the Sprott School of Business. One member should be the student's mentor or supervisor, one additional member from the student's area of focus, and at least one from outside the disciplinary area. The committee members will work together to set and assess the comprehensive examination.

Prospective committee members will be asked to serve this role by the PhD Director. Once established, the student will submit the **Comprehensive Committee Approval Form** (attached) to their supervisor/mentor with Part 1 completed. Additionally, the student will provide a written proposal for the comprehensive including the rationale and outline of the topic to be covered in the essay with indication of the scope of the literature to be reviewed. The topic must not be the same as for the student's intended thesis area.

The committee members will meet to review this document and make recommendations concerning its acceptance as the basis for the examination or amendments to the proposal. Once approved, each committee will sign off in Part 2.

The committee will also decide on the related but peripheral topics that the student is expected to know and that will be examined in the oral part of the comprehensive examination. These breadth areas will be indicated in Part 3.

By submitting the completed form to the PhD Administrator, the title, breadth areas, and members of the student's examination committee are proposed for approval by the PhD Director. Once approved, the student will be notified of their suggested oral examination date (typically 1 term or 3.5 months).

**SPROTT SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
CARLETON UNIVERSITY**

Together with their supervisor/mentor, students must schedule their oral examination with their committee members. Once a date and time is agreed upon by all members, the student or supervisor/mentor must notify the PhD Administrator so that a room can be booked, and a Chair can be secured. At this point, an official notice will be circulated to all members of the examination board.

**Written Component:**

It is expected that:

1. The student will complete a research essay that is primarily a comprehensive, analytical review of the literature on the topic of the examination.
2. The student will be expected to organize this review in a coherent fashion. The paper must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the field including classic pieces of work as well as work on the forefront of knowledge in the area. The student must demonstrate the ability to analyze what has been done, identify gaps, propose new research directions and generally offer a comprehensive view of how the area has developed and how it fits with other areas of business.
3. The paper will be in the neighborhood of 80-120 pages. This length is offered as a general guideline. Deviations are expected because of the variety of topics and possible approaches. In past, most comprehensive papers have been in the 80-120 pages range.
4. Student will submit copies of the paper for the committee members to the School's PhD Administrator at least two weeks prior to the oral examination.

**Note:** *In case the committee finds that the written report does not meet expectations, the student may be asked to revise and resubmit the written report.*

**Oral Component:**

It is expected that:

1. The oral examination associated with the comprehensive requirement will take approximately 3 hours (a break during the exam will likely be appropriate).
2. The student will make a brief presentation of the essay (15 minutes max.). An initial round or two of questions will focus on the content (broadly defined) of the research paper. Other rounds will be broader and can touch on other peripheral areas that the student would be expected to know about.

**Possible Outcomes of the Comprehensive Examination:**

A number of possible outcomes might occur - several of the most likely ones and their consequences are outlined below.

1. Student passes both the written and oral examination components.
2. Student fails both the written and the oral components of the examination. In this case, student is offered the opportunity to attempt the examination one more time only within one year of the first attempt.
3. Student fails the written component but passes the oral examination. The examining board may recommend that the student be offered the opportunity to submit one rewrite that must be completed within no more than 3 months. The revised version would be graded pass or fail by the committee members when evaluated. No repeat oral is required.
4. Student fails the oral examination component but passes the written component. The examining board may recommend that the student be offered the opportunity to retake the oral examination one more time within three months of the first oral.

**Notes:** *In decision making by the committee, the majority rule applies. Students must pass the comprehensive examination before defending the thesis proposal; continuous registration is required in BUSI 6908 until the student successfully completes the comprehensive examination.*

**SPROTT SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
CARLETON UNIVERSITY**

**Comprehensive Committee Approval Form**

**Part 1:**

PhD Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Student #: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:**

Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee:

Supervisor/Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Member : \_\_\_\_\_ Signed Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3:**

Breadth Area 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Readings assigned by: \_\_\_\_\_

Breadth Area 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Readings assigned by: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph.D. Director's signed Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_