

Office of Graduate Studies  
University of Kansas Medical Center

### **Comprehensive Oral Examination**

The comprehensive oral examination covers the major field and any extra departmental work for which the program wishes to hold the aspirant responsible. When a doctoral aspirant has completed the major portion of the course work at a level satisfactory to the graduate degree program and met all other program and general requirements prerequisite to the comprehensive oral examination, including the research skills and responsible research requirement as appropriately applied and established for the student's particular program, the degree program requests the Office of Graduate Studies approve the scheduling of the comprehensive oral examination via the Progress to Degree form. The degree program should ascertain that the student is in good academic standing (3.0 or higher grade-point average) and is currently in regular admission status, if the student was admitted provisionally, before scheduling the examination. The examination may be scheduled provided that at least 5 months have elapsed from the time of the aspirant's first enrollment at KU and at least 90 days have elapsed since any unsuccessful attempt. The examination request must be submitted in advance of the examination date by a minimum of two weeks.

The committee for the comprehensive oral examination must consist of at least 5 members, all of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty (see Graduate Faculty section of this catalog.) At least one member of the committee must be from a department other than the aspirant's major department. This outside committee member represents the Office of Graduate Studies and must hold either regular or dissertation graduate faculty status to be eligible to serve in this capacity. Before the examination, Graduate Studies provides the outside committee member a list of responsibilities as the Graduate Studies representative. The Graduate Studies representative is a voting member of the committee, has full right to participate in the examination, and reports any unsatisfactory or irregular aspects of the examination to the committee chair, department chair, and Graduate Studies.

The Office of Graduate Studies verifies that all criteria described in the preceding two paragraphs has been met upon receiving a Progress to Degree form requesting the scheduling of the Comprehensive Exam. If the criteria has been met, Graduate Studies approves the request to proceed with the exam.

For every scheduled examination, the degree program reports an exam result of Honors, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. If the aspirant receives a grade of Unsatisfactory on the comprehensive oral examination, it may be repeated on the recommendation of the program, but under no circumstances may it be taken more than 3 times. In any case, the examination may not be repeated until at least 90 days have elapsed since the last unsuccessful attempt.

Upon passing the comprehensive oral examination, the aspirant becomes a candidate for the doctorate. If it has not begun before, the traditional, close student-mentor apprenticeship relationship comes into being. The student is expected to learn by both precept and example of the mentor, and often in collaboration. The chosen field of scholarship is explored using acquired

research tools. The principles and customs of academic inquiry and the codes of ethics traditional to the various disciplines and professional fields become part of the student's thinking and working.

When the student passes the comprehensive oral examination, the program designates the candidate's dissertation committee. All members of the committee must be chosen from the Graduate Faculty, and the chair must, in addition, be authorized to chair doctoral dissertations.

### **Committee Attendance for Exam**

Ideally, all members of the committee are physically present at graduate student oral examinations. For M.S. and M.S. students this includes the final general exam, project defense or thesis defense. For Ph.D. students this includes the doctoral comprehensive oral exam, and the doctoral final oral exam (i.e., dissertation defense).

A majority of committee members must be physically present for an examination to commence; for doctoral oral examinations this requirement is 3 of the 5 members, for master's oral examinations the requirement is 2 of the 3 members.

In addition, it is required that the student being examined, the chair of the committee, and the outside committee member all be physically present at the examination or defense. Mediated attendance by the student, chair and outside member is prohibited. When a situation arises in which a member cannot be physically present, attendance via mediated means (tele/video-conferencing) is acceptable at the discretion of the committee chair.

In cases where the student prefers an examination in which all committee members are physically present, the student's preference shall be honored.

In the case of failure of technology during the examination, all members of the committee present must concur that the examination was substantially complete. If any member of the committee dissents, the examination is considered cancelled and must be rescheduled. The committee members at remote locations must be contacted to submit their decision concerning the assessment of the examination before the exam results are recorded.

The Office of Graduate Studies will manage consideration of and decisions on exceptions to the policy outlined above. Requests for exceptions to this policy shall be submitted in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies. If exceptions are granted, Graduate Studies will request that a member of the departmental leadership (the chair or director of graduate studies) be present at the examination.

### **Committee Composition**

The majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee in most cases are in the candidate's department/program of study.

Ph.D. doctoral committees are composed of at least five voting members and must adhere to the following requirements:

1. The chair of the committee must hold dissertation status. If the committee has co-chairs, at least one of the co-chairs must hold dissertation status.
2. One member must meet the requirements for serving as an outside member: i.e., be a KU faculty member holding regular or dissertation graduate faculty status and is not a faculty member holding graduate status in the candidate's department/program. The outside member represents Graduate Studies and is a voting member of the committee, has full rights to participate in the examination, and reports any unsatisfactory or irregular aspects of the examination.