

# MiNDS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

(last update Feb, 2022)

## OVERVIEW

- 1) TOPIC: Working together, the supervisory committee and candidate choose a research topic<sup>1</sup> for the comprehensive examination and decide on a slate of examiners for the committee
- 2) EXAM PROPOSAL: The student submits the proposed topic and committee for program review. Before submitting an exam proposal, the student should verify that proposed committee members will be available for the proposed period.
- 3) TIMELINE:
  - a. Once the topic and committee are approved, the student arranges a date and time for the oral examination that is 6 weeks (maximum 8 weeks) hence<sup>2</sup>.
  - b. The written proposal<sup>3</sup> must be distributed to all committee members no less than one week before the scheduled oral examination.
- 4) ORAL EXAM: The student provides an overview of the research proposal in a prepared presentation of 15-20 minutes, and then fields questions from members of the examining committee
  - a. The entire oral exam typically lasts 2-2.5 hours.
  - b. If the oral presentation exceeds 20 minutes, the committee chair may stop the presentation in order to proceed to the question period.

<sup>1</sup>Research topic:

The student must consult with the supervisory committee to choose a topic that meets the requirement for 1) being conceptually and methodologically distinct from the thesis work, as well as 2) having the potential to inform the thesis work.

<sup>2</sup>Timing:

The student is expected to use the first 5 weeks to conduct background reading, consult with members of the exam committee, and design and write up the grant proposal. As this is a full-time exercise, students are cautioned to avoid scheduling other significant time commitments during this period. For example, students should plan not to spend more than 10 hours a week on lab or TA duties while reading for, designing, and writing up the proposal.

<sup>3</sup>Written proposal:

The written proposal will take the general form of a research proposal from a CIHR project grant application. Note that a full grant application is not required and will not be accepted. Students are required to submit only the research proposal and bibliography sections of a CIHR application.

## CONSULTATION

Students are expected to take the initiative in contacting members of the exam committee for guidance in identifying and/or discussing readings and in developing the research proposal. Note that this guidance should not extend to reading of drafts, as the proposal must represent independent work by the student.

## RESEARCH PROPOSAL *Maximum 10 pages, including graphs and images\*\**

Provide a detailed description of the proposed research:

- State the objectives of the proposed research

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- Position the proposed research within the context of the current knowledge in the field; explain the significance of the proposed research
- Clearly state the research question(s) and/or hypothesis(es)
- Outline the methodology (including timelines) and why it was chosen
- Outline any plans for collaboration (if appropriate)
  - do not contact hypothetical collaborators for this exercise!

## ATTACHMENTS

- 1) **Bibliography (required)** *Maximum 4 pages\*\**  
Includes citations for all works referenced in the research proposal. These citations should be in the format used by the primary discipline of the proposed research. Reviewers must be able to easily locate sources.
- 2) **Summary** (optional, consult with committee) *Maximum 1 page \*\**  
The 1-page summary normally required for CIHR grants is optional for the comprehensive exam.
- 3) **Documents** (optional) *Not to exceed 30 MB, in (unprotected) PDF format*

### *\*\*Formatting instructions*

- Page size: 8 ½" x 11" (216mm x 279mm).
- Minimum margin 2 cm (¾") at top, bottom and both sides.
- Single-spaced text throughout. Maximum six lines per inch.
- Minimum font size 12 point, black type. Do not use condensed/narrow font sizes, type density, or line spacing. Smaller text is acceptable in tables, charts, figures, and graphs, but must be legible when page is viewed at 100%.
- For any additional formatting questions, the student should query committee members for their preferences/requirements
- Oral slides: any supporting figures should be referenced on the same slide

## OUTCOME

At the conclusion of the exam, immediately after conferring with the members of the examination committee, the chair notifies the student of the result of the exam. Students who fail the comprehensive exam will be given one opportunity to re-take the exam. The second attempt should take place as soon as feasible after the first attempt, but may in no case take place more than 6 months after the first attempt. Students who choose to make a second attempt are expected to treat this as a new exam and develop a new proposal, though the new proposal should fall within the previously approved topic area.