

GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
OF
BRYN MAWR
COLLEGE

PH.D. PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS GUIDELINES For Chairs and Members of Ph.D. Supervising Committee

The responsibilities and procedures of Ph.D. Supervising Committees are outlined in the Rules of the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. The Rules can be found here: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/files/current-faculty-rules-ma-and-phdrevised-may-2018pdf>
The present summary is intended for ready reference. Chairs, Supervising Committee members, and students are encouraged to consult the Faculty Rules for more complete information.

HIGHLIGHTS

Role of the Chair

The Chair protects the interests of the student and of the GSAS by insuring that the oral examination is both respectful and rigorous, and that the examiners agree on a fair and accurate assessment of the results.

Constitution of the Ph.D. Supervising Committee

The Committee must have at least four members plus the Chair. The four members must include the Dissertation Director of the student's work (if named/designated) and two other members of the student's department; the fourth member can be from another department. If the Dissertation Director is not a member of the student's department, another member of the Supervising Committee who is in the student's department must be designated general director of the student's progress. Committee members are recommended by the Dissertation Director and/or the Director of Graduate Studies at the time of the student's application for Ph.D. candidacy. Appointment of a committee member not on the faculty of Bryn Mawr College requires the prior approval of the Dean.

Responsibilities of the Ph.D. Supervising Committee

The Director of the candidate's work has principal responsibility for the candidate's progress, including defining the fields of the preliminary examinations and the subject of the dissertation, and overseeing the preparation of the dissertation and changes required by the Supervising Committee at the Final Oral Examination. The Supervising Committee shares responsibility, reading all Preliminary Examinations and the dissertation and advising as appropriate. The Supervising Committee may be called upon to mediate disputes between the student and his or her Director should any arise.

Format of the examinations

In *Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology*, *Greek, Latin and Classical Studies*, and *History of Art*, there are four written examinations and an oral. The oral must be held within five weeks of the first written exam. All examiners should have read all four examinations and all participate in the oral. In *Chemistry*, there are two, four-hour written examinations, one research proposal, and an oral examination on both components. In *Mathematics*, there are three written examinations and an oral. The examinations may be completed within five weeks or spread over two semesters; regardless of the timing, the oral examination follows the last written exam. In *Physics*, there are three written examinations, one 12-hour problem set, and an oral examination.

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Timing of the examinations

Preliminary Examinations may be taken only during the academic year and not within the 30 days immediately before the December degree date or Commencement. Examinations are scheduled by candidates through their department or program, normally by the department secretary. They must be scheduled by the beginning of October in semester I and by the beginning of February in semester II (the deadlines are posted on the GSAS website).

Written examinations

Written examinations should be distributed to members of the Supervising Committee as soon as they are completed. All members of the Committee must have read the written examinations before the oral. Examiners are required to read examinations promptly and to notify the Chair of the Supervising Committee if s/he finds any of them unsatisfactory. If multiple examiners find one or more examinations unsatisfactory, or if one examiner feels especially strongly, the Chair may decide to convene the committee before the oral to determine whether the oral exam should be deferred or cancelled (in which case, no votes on the written examinations are recorded, and the student may be required to take them again at a later time).

Conduct of the oral examination

On the day of the oral exam, the Chair must pick up the necessary paperwork, including the student's *Ph.D. candidacy form*, from the GSAS office (Old Library, room 120). Oral examinations must last at least one hour and no longer than three hours. Time and conduct are monitored by the Chair. At the beginning of the exam, the Chair asks the student to leave the room so the committee can briefly discuss the written examinations and fix the time and order allotted to each examiner (the exam must last at least one hour; normally, examiners are initially allotted 15-20 minutes apiece). The student is then invited back into the room, and the Chair sees that the examination proceeds in the order agreed upon. Committee members should not interrupt their colleagues unless it has been previously agreed that this is acceptable. After every examiner has finished his or her allotted time, the Chair should ask if any member of the Committee has further questions for the candidate. The Chair is not a voting member of the Committee, but may put questions to the candidate after the other Committee members have finished. After the last question the candidate is asked to leave the room while the Committee deliberates. The student is invited to return a final time to hear the results. The outcome of the examination is recorded on the candidacy form.

Possible outcomes

The only permissible outcomes are: *Satisfactory*; *Partially Satisfactory*; *Unsatisfactory*. If the examination is judged "Partially Satisfactory" the Chair asks the examiners how the deficiency should be made up and by what date (*this date must be within one year of the date of the oral*). The Chair records this information clearly and explicitly on the candidacy form or in a follow-up email to the Dean of Graduate Studies. If the result is "Unsatisfactory" the committee must decide whether to exclude the student from further study, or to permit the student to retake the Preliminary Examinations. If Committee members disagree about the outcome, the majority prevails, but the vote of dissenting members should be recorded on the form. Dissenters may also file a minority report.

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Get the signatures

The Chair insures that every examiner signs the student's candidacy form in the proper place at the end of the examination. The Chair also signs the form (in a different place) to confirm her or his oversight of the exam.

Return the form

At the end of the examination the Chair delivers the signed form and, in the case of a deficiency, any instructions, to the GSAS office. The Dean communicates the result of the examinations in writing to the student. If additional work is assigned to correct deficiencies, the Committee must attest that the additional work is satisfactory, and this result must be recorded on the candidate's form. *No candidate may be permitted more than one reexamination when the first examination is unsatisfactory.*