Structure and process of the doctoral candidacy exam in Chemistry

- The candidacy examination in Chemistry requires the student to give a 20-25 minute presentation regarding their research followed by 2 rounds of questions as detailed below.

Process
- The Chair will open with a statement such as, “We are here for the candidacy examination of (student's name). I will ask the student to please leave the room while we go over your record and establish the order of questions”.
- Once the student has left the room the Chair reviews the student's record with the committee. It is typical that the supervisor also provides some insight into the student’s program.
- The Chair calls for questions on the student’s record (offers to circulate file to examiners).
- The Chair establishes an order of questioning and informs the committee that there may be a break after the first round. The supervisor is invited to ask questions last but it is not uncommon for the supervisor not to ask questions. It is permitted for another examiner to ask a related question during a different examiner’s question period. This should be done in a clear and ordered manner. The Chair should inform the committee this is allowed.
- The Chair should inform the committee that they will be held to 10-15 minutes of question in the first round and 5-7 minutes in the second. With the committee’s input an explicit time limit should be set (e.g., 12 min in round 1 and 5 min in round 2). It is the Chair’s responsibility to hold the examiners to the agreed upon time.
- The student is invited back into the room.
- The Chair briefs the student on the process, i.e., they should give a 20-25 min presentation that will be followed by 2 rounds of questions and notify them of the order of questioning, timing, etc.
- The Chair invites the student to begin their 20-25 min presentation.
- During the question period, the Chair acts as a referee to ensure that fairness, balance and order are maintained and that the interest of the student is adequately protected.
- At the conclusion of the examination the student is given the opportunity to make a closing statement or ask closing questions. It is typically the case that the student has nothing to add.
- Student is asked to leave the room.
- After the student has left the room, the examiners deliberate. Usually the deliberation starts with a quick vote (pass or other) in the order of questioning. If votes other than pass are cast, a conversation then takes place. A final decision is normally arrived at via discussion until a consensus is reached.
- The decision of the examining committee will be based on a number of factors, including: research quality, ability to answer questions correctly, and reasonable amount of work done, and a plan, to complete their Ph.D. in a timely manner. The candidacy examination may result in one of the following outcomes:

1. Adjourned
2. Pass
3. Conditional pass
4. Fail and repeat the candidacy
5. Fail with a recommendation to terminate the doctoral program or for a change of category to a master's program.

If the Examining Committee fails to reach a decision, the department will refer the matter to the Dean, FGSR, who will determine an appropriate course of action.
When the decision is Conditional Pass or Fail, chairs may refer to the decision process flowchart found on the FGSR website.

**Adjourned:** A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Adjourned. The candidacy examination should be adjourned in the event of compelling, extraordinary circumstances such as a sudden medical emergency-taking place during the examination or possible offences under the Code of Student Behaviour after the examination has started.

**Pass:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass. If the student passes the candidacy examination, the department should complete the Report of Completion of Candidacy Examination form and submit it to the FGSR.

**Conditional Pass:** A Conditional Pass is appropriate when the student has satisfied the committee in all but a very discrete area of deficiency that can addressed through a reasonable requirement (e.g., coursework, literature review, upgrading of writing skills). Reworking of the entire candidacy proposal is not an acceptable condition and the examiners should consider the options available for a student that has failed the examination.

A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Conditional Pass. If the candidacy examining committee agrees to a conditional pass for the student, the chair of the examining committee will provide in writing within five working days to the Dean, FGSR, the graduate coordinator and the student:

- The reasons for this recommendation,
- The details of the conditions,
- The timeframe for the student to meet the conditions, but which should be no less than six weeks and no more than six months.
- The approval mechanism for meeting the conditions (e.g., approval of the committee chair or supervisor, or approval of the entire committee, or select members of the committee), and
- The supervision and assistance the student can expect to receive from committee members

Conditions are subject to final approval by the Dean, FGSR. At the deadline specified for meeting the conditions, two outcomes are possible:

- All the conditions have been met. In this case, the department will complete the Report of Completion of Candidacy Examination form and submit it to the FGSR; or
- If the conditions are not met by the deadline, the outcome of the examination is a fail and the committee must be reconvened to make the recommendation as described in the following section.

**Fail:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail.

The options available to the examining committee when the outcome of a student's candidacy exam is "Fail" are

- **Repeat the Candidacy:** Repeating the Candidacy is not an option after a second failed examination. A majority of examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail and Repeat the Candidacy. If the student's first candidacy exam performance was inadequate but the student's performance and work completed to date indicate that the student has the potential to perform at the doctoral level, the examining committee should consider the possibility of
recommending that the student be given an opportunity to repeat the candidacy exam. Normally, the composition of the examining committee does not change for the repeat candidacy exam.

If the recommendation of a repeat candidacy is formulated by the examining committee and approved by the FGSR, the student and graduate coordinator are to be notified in writing of the student's exam deficiencies by the chair of the examining committee. The second candidacy exam is to be scheduled no later than six months from the date of the first candidacy. In the event that the student fails the second candidacy, the examining committee shall recommend one of the following two options to the department:

- **Change of Category to a Master's Program:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail and Change of Category to a Master's Program. This outcome should be considered if the student's candidacy examination performance was inadequate and the student's performance and work completed to date indicates that the student has the potential to complete a master's, but not a doctoral, program; or

- **Termination of the Doctoral Program:** All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Fail and Terminate the Doctoral Program. If the student's performance was inadequate, and the work completed during the program is considered inadequate, then the examining committee should recommend termination of the student's program.

If the candidacy examining committee agrees that the student has failed, the committee chair will provide the reasons and the recommendation for the student's program to the department. The graduate coordinator will then provide this report, together with the department's recommendation for the student's program, to the Dean, FGSR, and to the student.

For failed candidacy examinations, an Associate Dean, FGSR, normally arranges to meet with the student (and others as required) before acting upon any department recommendation.

- The student is invited back into the room and is made aware of the decision. For decision other than Pass, the Chair and the supervisor should discuss the decision carefully with the student before leaving the room.