

**PROCEDURES FOR PHD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS IN
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION (SMO)/
STRATEGY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & MANAGEMENT (SEM)
(Effective January 2025)**

NOTE

A. Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) has only a general policy regarding procedures for PhD comprehensive examinations.

B. The comprehensive examination regulations are a departmental responsibility. However, they are subject to the School general policy, which is outlined in the Alberta School of Business PhD program document entitled, *Procedures for Comprehensive Examinations* (revised 2023-12-19).

C. According to *Procedures for Comprehensive Examinations* "Students must pass the examination within a maximum of two attempts. Students who do not pass in two attempts are required to withdraw from the program."

PURPOSE

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to assess if the students are adequately prepared to proceed to the candidacy stage of the PhD program. Students must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committee that they possess: (a) an adequate knowledge of the disciplines and the subject matters relevant to the examinations; and (b) the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level.

PROCEDURES

The comprehensive examination consists of two parts: (A) a 2nd year paper and (B) three written exams.

A. The 2nd year paper

1. The 2nd year paper is a research paper written by the student, and normally based on primary or secondary data collected and analyzed during the first summer. The expectation is that the paper will be of appropriate quality for an academic conference submission.

2. The written paper should be submitted for evaluation by January 31 of the student's second year in the program.

3. A small committee of faculty (the student's supervisor and two other faculty members) will evaluate the quality of the paper. The evaluation criteria should mirror what is typically used in the editorial process (theoretically and methodologically sound). The committee can judge the paper as "acceptable" or offer a "revise and resubmit" option with recommendations for improvement. The student shall then improve the paper and submit the paper again for evaluation. The deadline for resubmission is March 15.

4. After the paper is evaluated as acceptable, the student will make an oral presentation based on this paper. The audience will be the small committee (supervisor and two faculty who “accepted” the paper) and other interested faculty and students. The supervisor will determine who is invited to the presentation. The date of the presentation must be in advance of May 31 of the student’s second year. This presentation will follow the format of scholarly presentations at the Academy of Management. Students will give a 15 minute oral presentation of their paper and then answer questions from the committee and other members of the audience. The total length of the presentation session will normally be approximately 30 minutes. Students will receive feedback on their presentation but will not be evaluated.

B. Three written exams

1. The 2nd year paper must be “accepted” and presented before the student is permitted to take the written exams.

2. The Chair of the Comprehensive Examination Committee for the written exams is the SEM representative on the PhD Policy Committee. If the SEM representative is also one of the examining professors, then the Chair of SEM may appoint another professor to chair the committee. Other examining professors on the committee are normally those who design each of the written exams taken by a student. Thus, the composition of the committee may differ among students.

3. The three written exams are associated with the three core courses taken by the student. If a student has taken more than three of these courses, the student together with his or her supervisor will choose which three exams to write. The following six courses are considered core courses:

- SEM 701 (Organization Theory),
- SEM 702 (Human Behaviour in Organization),
- SEM 703 (Strategic Management),
- SEM 707 (Special Topics),
- SEM 708 (Industrial Relations),
- SEM 709 (Human Resource Management).

4. Usually, but not necessarily, the instructor of each core course designs the written exam, that is, the number of questions, their relative weight, and the amount of choice offered to the students. The SEM Department is responsible for scheduling the exam and booking rooms.

5. Students will be allowed to access personal files and articles, and virtual connections and online articles to help construct their papers. Students may use their own or a department/university-supplied computer to take the exam. The electronic or hardcopy answers will be collected by the SEM Office and forwarded to the relevant professor setting the exam, and copied to other members of the examining committee.

6. The written exams will normally be held in mid-June. All three exams will normally be taken within one week. Each exam should last for up to eight hours (9 am – 5 pm) and will be taken on a different day. Questions will be administered in person or via email at the beginning of the examination period, and will be collected in person or via email by the end of the examination period.

7. The results of the written comprehensive examinations will normally be reported back to the students within one week of the last written exam. The Chair of the Committee will send each student a letter with the final result: Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail.

8. Students must pass the **ENTIRE** comprehensive examination, that is, its four parts. They must have their 2nd year paper accepted, and they must pass each of the three written exams. In case of a conditional pass on any of the three written exams, the Examination Committee will set one or more conditions that when satisfied will result in a pass for the entire comprehensive exam. Conditions will be set on a case-by-case basis. They may include, but are not limited to, the re-sitting of one written comprehensive examination; the re-writing of one or more questions from the comprehensive examination; and/or the completion of a paper on one of the comprehensive examination topics. Should the conditions not be fulfilled by the date specified by the Examination Committee, the result is that the student fails the comprehensive examination in its entirety.

9. For a student who obtains a conditional pass, or a fail, the chair of the Examination Committee will explain the reasons. The written note should briefly state in an unambiguous manner the reasons for the failure or conditional pass and can suggest that the student also speak to her/his supervisor or some other members of the Written Examination Committee.

10. Students who fail the exam will be encouraged to leave the program. If students request a second attempt, all components of the exam must be retaken within three months of the notification of the initial failure.