



UBC iSchool Doctoral Studies Handbook of Policies and Procedures

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This Policies and Procedures Handbook for the iSchool PhD program has been developed as a guide for faculty members and students. The policies and procedures set out have been formulated within the overall regulations of The University of British Columbia and the specific regulations and guidelines of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Territorial Acknowledgement

UBC School of Information is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Learn more at indigenous.ubc.ca.

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the iSchool doctoral program is to prepare students to be leaders in the fields of research, teaching, and administration related to archival, library, and information science. The program is designed to provide advanced research training for outstanding students who have already obtained a graduate degree in archival studies, library and information studies, or equivalent; it culminates in the production of a piece of original research.

The primary markets for graduates of this doctoral program are university programs in archival/information studies; public institutions or government departments such as national/provincial/state archives, university libraries, and information policy departments; and private industry where high-level research, management, and product development are required.

Role of Doctoral Students in the iSchool

Doctoral students are valued members of the iSchool community and are expected to participate in and contribute to the academic life of the school and university through attendance at colloquia and public lectures and by serving as student representatives on committees and taking up available Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant positions.

Communication and PR

The iSchool website includes a list of current doctoral students together with brief profiles. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that the [iSchool Program Assistant](#) has current and updated information for the website. Students who reach candidacy will be provided with iSchool personal business cards upon request (ischool.info@ubc.ca).

The school communicates with PhD students through email directly and via the iSchool PhD List (phd-ischool@lists.ubc.ca). It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they are signed up for this list and receive messages, as important notices are distributed through this channel.

Administration of the Program

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (Graduate Studies) works in conjunction with individual schools and faculties to administer graduate programs. Among the responsibilities of Graduate Studies are approving curriculum changes, determining or verifying the admissibility of students applying for the PhD program, approving leaves of absence and extensions, coordinating fellowships and awards, and determining whether students are eligible to graduate. For more information about Graduate Studies' responsibilities, see the Faculty website (www.grad.ubc.ca).

UBC iSchool Director

As the chief administrative officer and spokesperson for the school, the Director has overall responsibility for the administration of iSchool programs, including the PhD program. The Director delegates to committees and individual Faculty members the direct responsibility for implementing the PhD program policies and procedures.

Doctoral Studies Committee

The iSchool Doctoral Studies Committee (DSC) is responsible for the development and administration of the PhD program, for ensuring that the quality of the program is maintained and regulations adhered to, and for the counselling of students.

The members of the DSC are all iSchool faculty members who are members in good standing of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, i.e. engaged in an active program of teaching, research and publication. The Director, the Chair of the DSC, and all other eligible iSchool faculty members are automatically members of the committee. In practice, a subcommittee of the DSC is appointed each year by the Director to manage the program and report to and consult with the full DSC at monthly Faculty Meetings. In addition, each year a call is sent to the doctoral student listserv requesting a volunteer to serve on this committee.

Chair of the Doctoral Studies Committee

The Chair of the Doctoral Studies Committee participates in the administration of the PhD program by:

1. coordinating the selection and admissions process for PhD applicants and chairing the Subcommittee on PhD Admissions,
2. chairing meetings of the DSC and the DSC Subcommittee and administering the program on behalf of the DSC,
3. conferring with the DSC on matters of policy, procedure, and regulation that require their attention and/or approval,
4. monitoring procedures for qualifying examinations and dissertation defences
5. working with the Graduate Advisor, Director, and the staff of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to keep them apprised of matters that require their attention,
6. approving the composition of dissertation committees, with the Director,

7. acting as a general adviser and counsellor to PhD students on matters of program and general welfare, and conferring with iSchool advisers and supervisors on students' progress throughout their programs,
8. reporting to iSchool Faculty Meetings, on behalf of the DSC, matters of interest to the Faculty as a whole, or matters that require iSchool faculty approval, and
9. promoting the doctoral program within the university, nationally, and internationally.

Dissertation Committees

Dissertation committees are established and administered as set out in the Dissertation section of the Handbook.

Course Requirements

Students entering the doctoral program with an approved master's degree will be required to take four six-credit (2-term) courses. Generally, students would take LAIS 605 (Research Methods), LAIS 607 (Doctoral Pro-Seminar), a second course on data analysis, and LAIS 608 (Academic and Research Practices in LAIS). Students who take LAIS 609B (Archival Theory, offered occasionally), may opt-out of LAIS 608.

In most cases, courses additional to these courses will be recommended to students. In consultation with the student's adviser, the student may be required to take courses in the SLAIS Master of Library Studies program or the Master of Archival Studies program to enhance the knowledge acquired in the student's master's degree and to provide sufficient background for the doctoral courses. Doctoral students will be strongly encouraged to take graduate-level courses from other UBC departments that will increase their knowledge in their chosen area of research. These courses are chosen in consultation with the student's adviser, and are additional to those required for ARST 621 or LIBR 621. Requirements for the PhD program are:

Typically Year 1

- LAIS 605 (3) Advanced Seminar in Research Methods.
- At least one additional 3 credit course on data analysis (at the 500 level). The course must be pre-approved by the student's supervisor.
- LAIS 607 (3) Doctoral Proseminar.

AND AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- LAIS 608 (3) Academic and Research Practices in Library Archival and Information Studies.
- LAIS 609B (3) Archival Theory.

For the above, alternative courses can be approved based on consultation between the student and their supervisor.

Year 2

- LAIS 620 (6) Advanced Study in Major Area
- LAIS 621 (6) Advanced Study in Minor Area

Additional coursework as recommended by the research supervisor and/or doctoral committee

Note that the LAIS 620 and 621 courses may be satisfied through a combination of supervised reading and attending/auditing formal courses. Assignments and grading schemes will be set by the Program Advisor in consultation with any course instructors involved. Qualifying examinations (written and oral components) are a required component of the 620 and 621 courses, and the final grades for these courses are based on 50% coursework and 50% qualifying examination grade

- LAIS 699: Dissertation

Residency requirement

The iSchool doctoral program requires that students be residents in the Vancouver area for a minimum of 16 months. This time period may be broken into two segments of 12 months and 4 months at the discretion of the student's adviser and the Chair of the Doctoral Studies Program. The University of British Columbia considers all doctoral students to be full-time throughout their studies. However, in consultation with the adviser and the Chair of the Doctoral Studies Program, a student may engage in concurrent paid employment that does not interfere with full-time study.

Registration requirement

All doctoral students admitted must register when they begin their studies and they must remain continuously registered until the degree is completed, except for periods when a formal leave of absence has been approved by Graduate Studies. Failure to register for two consecutive terms may result in the student being required to withdraw. Students are assessed fees until the end of the month in which they submit the final version of their thesis to Graduate Studies

Examination requirements

Doctoral students must successfully complete three examination milestones:

1. Qualifying Examinations in both the major and minor area. These are the culmination of the LAIS 620 and 621 courses and should be completed within 24 months of initial registration (see special section)
2. Proposal Defence. This should be completed within 30 months of registration. (see special section)

Note: Once the student has completed both the Qualifying Exams and Proposal Defence, the student is admitted to candidacy. A "Recommendation for Advancement to Candidacy" form is then sent to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies who enter the designation "Admitted to Candidacy" on the student's transcript (Appendix A. Current version of form located at grad.ubc.ca > Forms > Forms for Faculty and Staff).

A student who is not admitted to candidacy within 36 months of initial registration must withdraw from the program. Extension of this period may be permitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies in exceptional circumstances.

3. Dissertation Defence. This must be completed within six years of initial registration (see special section)

Program Adviser

A Program Adviser will be assigned to each student as soon as the student is accepted, with the adviser's agreement. The adviser must be a member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and must be either a tenured faculty member or tenure-track member who has held a tenure-track appointment for at least one year. The adviser is chosen on the basis of expertise in the student's proposed field of research, and normally, the Program Adviser is also the student's instructor in the course work for the major subject. The Program Adviser MAY ultimately become the student's dissertation supervisor.

The student is free to select a different program adviser from the one assigned. The student should seek an adviser who is able and willing to spend the time and effort necessary for the advising role, and with whom a productive and comfortable working relationship can be established. Students should seek advice from the Chair of the DSC or from the Director when they wish to change, and should notify the Chair once a change has been made.

The Program Adviser's responsibilities are as follows:

1. at the beginning of the student's program, to interview the student in depth, discuss the content of the projected area of study, and the possible selection of courses outside the school,
2. to act as mentor and to meet with the student on a regular basis throughout the course of the adviser's term of responsibility (usually two years),
3. to supervise the student in the Advanced Study in a Major Area reading course (usually in the second year)
4. to aid the student in defining his/her field of research and course of studies, and in preparing for the comprehensive examinations,
5. to report on the student's progress annually to the DSC, and
6. to consult with the Chair of the DSC regarding any change in the student's program, extensions of time required for completing course work, and general progress of the student through the program.

Dissertation Supervisor & Supervisory Committee

Upon successful completion of the qualifying examinations, the student will enter the dissertation stage of the program. From the beginning of work on the dissertation proposal through completion of the dissertation, each student has a dissertation supervisor. The supervisor will be appointed by the Doctoral Studies Committee at the request of the student and with the agreement of the faculty member, who must hold a doctoral degree, be a member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and must be either a tenured member or tenure-track member who has held the tenure-track appointment for at least one year. The supervisor's agreement is recorded in the student's file. If the supervisor's availability to work with the student is compromised by lengthy scheduled or unexpected absences, the Chair of the DSC, in consultation with all concerned, may appoint a new supervisor.

The supervisor, after discussion with the student and other faculty members, will suggest other members of the Supervisory Committee to be approved by the DSC. The role of the Supervisory Committee is to provide support to the student by broadening and deepening the range of expertise and experience available and to offer advice about and assessment of students' work.

The student and Dissertation Supervisor should consult together and agree upon the constitution of the committee. The Supervisory Committee must be comprised of at least three faculty members (including the supervisor), some of whom may be from outside the iSchool. With the approval of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the committee may also include qualified persons who are not faculty members. While a committee may contain more than three members, the majority of the committee must be members in the UBC Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Any request to change the Dissertation Supervisor must be submitted in writing by the student to the Chair of the DSC after the student discusses the change with both the current Supervisor and proposed Supervisor. Students retain the right to change supervisors with impunity. Approval for the change and the selection of another Dissertation Supervisor is recorded in the student's file.

The Dissertation Supervisor's responsibilities are as follows:

1. to assist in choosing the Supervisory Committee and to confirm the eligibility of all members selected,
2. to meet regularly with the student and facilitate progress toward completion of the research,
3. to arrange with the iSchool support staff and the DSC Chair to schedule the dissertation proposal presentation,
4. to liaise with the Graduate Advisor and iSchool staff to schedule the dissertation defence with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies;
5. to secure appropriate signatures from Dissertation examiners and assure that all required paperwork is submitted in accordance with iSchool, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and University procedures.

Doctoral Candidates should arrange periodic meetings of their Supervisory Committee, at a frequency of no less than once per year. More frequent meetings are strongly recommended.

Guidance in carrying out these responsibilities may be obtained from [the Graduate Studies website](#).

Annual Evaluation of Academic Progress

The progress of all students working toward the PhD will be reviewed regularly and at least once each year. Any student who is found to be making unsatisfactory progress, as shown by course work, the qualifying exams examinations, progress on the dissertation, or other requirements of iSchool, may be required to withdraw.

Normally, the Chair of DSC and members of the DSC Subcommittee will direct evaluations for all students in the Spring/Summer. In extraordinary circumstances, the students, the adviser, or the Director may call an ad hoc evaluation meeting at any time.

Evaluation Goals and Procedures

The major purpose of the evaluation is to provide the student with the Faculty's joint assessment of his/her progress in the program and of his/her plans for the following year.

All students will take part in the evaluation, which is conducted through an annual review report prepared by each student and reviewed by his or her advisor or supervisor. A notice and evaluation forms will be sent out to the PhD Student list at least 3 weeks prior to the report submission date. Students are asked to complete the form and submit that, together with a current CV to their advisor/supervisor, who then reviews the materials and submits them, together with a brief Advisor's Report, to the Chair of the DSC.

All members of the DSC Subcommittee review the materials submitted and meet to discuss each student's progress. The DSC Chair compiles responses and prepares individual letters to provide feedback to students. The DSC Chair also prepares a summary report of the process and outcomes and presents this to the full DSC at a faculty meeting.

On the basis of the review materials, the faculty members present shall determine whether the student's progress is:

1. Satisfactory,
2. Unsatisfactory in some areas (progress is questionable in key areas, but the student should remain in the program), or
3. Unacceptable.

The student's progress should be described as "Satisfactory" only when all the following criteria are met:

1. The student achieves a minimum of 68% (B-) in all courses. The student must maintain an overall B (72-75%) average, however, a grade of less than 75% will raise concern about the student's level of competence in the assessed area.
2. The student is able to work productively with Faculty and other students in coursework, research, and teaching.
3. In his/her first year, the student is able to:

- a. understand the methods and substance of the fields of library, archival or information studies.
 - b. communicate his/her understanding to other people, and
 - c. give evidence of the ability to conduct research under supervision.
4. After his/her first year, the student is able to proceed at a reasonable pace in demonstrating
- a. an accomplished mastery of the methods and substance of the fields of library, archival or information studies,
 - b. the ability to analyze and synthesize diverse data, theories, and methods,
 - c. the potential ability to develop and defend an original research proposal, and
 - d. the ability to carry out all stages of the research process independently.

If the student's progress is determined to be "Unsatisfactory in some areas" or "Unacceptable," the Chair of the DSC will arrange a meeting with the Advisor/Supervisor and the student to discuss the issues and concerns. Every attempt should be made to give the student an opportunity to improve his/her areas of deficiency. In general, students whose progress is unsatisfactory should not be counselled to leave the program until they have been at this status level for at least one year. Students whose progress is unacceptable should be counseled to consider the options available. A student may withdraw from active participation in the program at his/her request. See section on "on-leave status" below.

Qualifying Examinations

Overview

The qualifying exams for the School of Information PhD consist of coursework (LAIS 620 and LAIS 621) as well as a formal examination with written and oral components.

This overview of the qualifying exam process is meant as a guide for students and faculty. While specific details of each student's exam preparation, writing and defence will vary, there are consistent timelines, objectives and expectations of all doctoral students. This document sets out a process for preparing for, writing, and assessing the qualifying examination as a key milestone in a student's progress toward degree.

Students receive course credit (and faculty receive teaching credit) for LAIS 620 and LAIS 621. As such, the policies related to student resources, academic concession, academic integrity, academic accommodation, and conflicting responsibilities that apply to all other coursework also apply to the qualifying examination. Students who have needs or concerns related to these policies can negotiate adjustments to the exam procedures with their advisor and the Doctoral Studies Chair. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>)

Coursework & Exam Preparation

Upon completion of all other degree coursework requirements (See: degree requirements), a student is enrolled in LAIS 620 (Advanced Study in the Major Area) and LAIS 621 (Advanced Study in the Minor Area) by the Program Assistant. The courses are six credits each, and should be taken over the course of the Winter 1 & 2 terms of the second year of doctoral study. These courses represent the preparation for the qualifying exam (50%) as well as the exam itself (50%). The preparation portion of each course is satisfied through a directed study with the student's advisor or potential committee member. The advisor may recommend additional coursework for credit or course auditing, depending on the student's background or intended topic of study.

Through the LAIS 620 and 621 coursework, the student provides evidence that they are able to:

- Identify and describe Major and Minor areas of focus that will frame the examination process;
- Read for both depth and breadth in the areas of focus;
- Curate bibliographies of academic sources that represent key concepts, ideas, theories, or methods in the areas of focus;
- Develop research relevant questions that emerge from the reading;
- Connect the research focus area(s) with the broader discipline;
- Communicate clearly and effectively to academic audiences, in written and oral forms.

Key outputs from the LAIS 620/621 coursework are materials that guide the examination process, specifically:

1. An overview document for the Major and Minor areas (length determined by the advisor, however 1500 to 3000 words is typical) that provides a fulsome description of the areas of focus, important concepts and definitions, and key questions that emerge from reading in these areas; and
2. A guiding bibliography of 40-50 sources for each of the areas of focus.

Generative AI Tools & the Qualifying Exam

You are advised to use the following resources to ensure you understand the principles for the use of GenAI, including the risks arising from its use.

- [Use of Generative AI](#)
- [GenAI guidance resources](#) via the [UBC Generative AI website](#).
- [UBC Academic Integrity website](#).

After familiarizing yourself with concerns and ethics regarding the use of GenAI for research and writing, if you wish to use services such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Co-Pilot for your research, drafting of and/or the preparation of your qualifying exam responses, you **must discuss this with your supervisor and committee members** before doing so to ensure there is agreement on the acceptable use of GenAI for your writing.

Your qualifying exam responses must include a coversheet that addresses the following:

- If you **use GenAI tools** in the development of your responses, you must name the specific tool (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Co-Pilot) and include a concise description of how this tool was

used. This includes use of GenAI in the research, the drafting of, and/or the preparation of your qualifying exam responses.

- If you do **not use GenAI tools in** the development of your responses, please include a brief statement, “GenAI tools were not used in the development of my responses”.

Areas of Focus

The Major and Minor areas of focus are developed with the approval and consultation of the advisor and examination committee. The Major and Minor together should support the development of student thinking, but not encapsulate exhaustively the thinking within a discipline. The level of specificity and scope are important considerations. The Major and Minor areas should be complementary but not overlap. For example, the Major area may be the central focus of a student’s intended inquiry, with the Minor area a complementary theory or method, or a cognate area related to but not a subset of the Major.

Exam Objectives

The qualifying exam has two overarching objectives: 1) to assess the student’s knowledge of current trends, theories, and methods in the areas of focus; 2) to determine if the doctoral student is sufficiently prepared to design their dissertation project.

Through the qualifying exam, the student provides evidence that they are able to:

- Identify and critically read relevant literature in the areas of focus;
- Comprehend and evaluate arguments in the areas of focus;
- Integrate and synthesize ideas within the areas of focus;
- Put their research focus area(s) in conversation with the broader discipline;
- Communicate clearly and effectively to academic audiences, in written and oral forms.

Indicators

The student will be expected to demonstrate their knowledge, and critical analysis in the discipline through:

- knowledge of the main issues or problems in the areas of focus;
- incisive evaluation of current and past research;
- rigorous analysis, organization and synthesis of information;
- clear written, and oral communication of ideas, concepts and arguments.

Students are expected to read carefully and write to issues that are contained within these bibliographies, but cannot be expected to read or write outside them as part of the examination process.

Examination Committee

The faculty member who advises a doctoral student through their course work and qualifying exams is known as an *adviser*. This is usually (but not always) the same person who supervises their work as they write their dissertation, the *supervisor*.

The student and their adviser will assemble an Examination Committee that will adjudicate the Major and Minor focus areas by setting the exam questions and assessing the answers. The Examination Committee will consist of the adviser and two or three additional faculty members. These are typically faculty who have served as instructors to the student, have supervised reading

courses in one or more of the areas of study, or have expertise related to the focus areas. The student's adviser will chair the committee.

Questions on the Major and Minor Written Examinations

The Examination Committee will set the questions for both the Major and Minor area exams. The questions will be based on the Major and Minor focus area descriptions and accompanying bibliographies approved by the committee by the end of January of their second year. After committee approval, the scheduling of the written exam and oral defense can occur.

Structure of the Examinations

1. The qualifying examination occurs in the Winter 2 term of the student's second year in the Doctoral Program, and must be completed within 24 months of starting the program, as required by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
2. Writing of the Major and Minor areas will occur within a 30-day period, and the overall length of the examination should not exceed two months.
3. The format for the written examination is a take-home examination to be completed during a 21-day writing period. The writing period must begin and end on a weekday. The dates can be negotiated, and a one-day extension granted if a statutory holiday, religious holiday or cultural observance falls within the writing period (see UBC policy on conflicting responsibilities).
4. The examination is intended to be a sequestered writing period, during which the student should have minimal contact with other students and faculty. Peer editing and reviewing of draft answers is not permissible, nor should the student and advisor or examination committee consult on the questions once they are administered. Students who need accommodations such as an extended exam period or writing support should consult with their advisor and DSC Chair in advance of the examination scheduling.
5. The examination will comprise two significant essays, one each for the Major and Minor focus areas. The essay prompts will be formulated by the committee, and reflect the depth and breadth of the Major and Minor. The major area essay prompt should be presented as an opportunity for the student to compose a "state of the field" review related to the student's area of research focus. The Minor essay prompt should permit the student to focus on a theory, method or cognate area that complements the Major area, without being redundant. In terms of length, approximately 5,000 words (including references) would constitute a minimal answer for each essay, with 7-10,000 words judged more acceptable in most cases.
6. An oral examination of not more than three hours will occur not more than two weeks following the completion of the writing period.
7. The oral examination committee consists of at least three members of Examination Committee.
8. The Chair of the DSC serves as examination chair, and there is no audience present.

Sample Exam Timeline (Actual dates negotiated among student, committee, and DSC Chair):

- Supervisor submits questions vetted and approved by the examining committee to the Program Assistant one week before the exam writing period begins (February 24).
- Student receives exam questions on Friday March 3 at 9am [21-day writing period begins].

- Student submits written answers to Program Assistant on Thursday March 23 at 5pm [Writing period ends].
- Committee has seven days to read and evaluate essays.
- Committee communicates to DSC Chair that oral exam will proceed on Thursday March 30.
- Oral exam occurs Friday March 31.

Preliminary Assessment of Exams

After a student submits the written qualifying exam essays, the examination committee will have no less than seven days to read and evaluate them prior to the oral examination. The committee should confer prior to the oral examination to confirm that the quality of the written essays is adequate to proceed. If the essays are adequate, the student will proceed to the oral examination. If the essays are deemed inadequate, the committee will recommend either a mark of FAIL, or Adjournment (see below). The committee's agreement to proceed or not proceed to the oral examination should be a consensus decision sent to the DSC Chair at least one day prior to the oral examination.

Oral Examination of Major and Minor Area

The purpose of the oral examination is to allow the student to provide context for their written exam answers, to demonstrate additional depth and breadth of knowledge in the area, and to show their communicative competency. The questions of the oral examination will be related to the questions answered by the student in the written examination of the major and minor areas. Examiners' questions will be based on peripheral or related material that contributes to a complete answer to the questions posed.

The oral examination will be comprised of the following parts:

- Introductions and clarification of procedures by the DSC Chair or designate
- Student presentation (15 minutes maximum – see below)
- Examination of the Major Area: At least one round of questions from each examiner, until all examiners are satisfied.
- Examination of the Minor Area: At least one round of questions from each examiner, until all examiners are satisfied.
- In-camera session: The student is dismissed, and the examiners meet with the Chair to discuss the outcome, feedback, and mark for the examination.
- Feedback: The student returns to the exam session and the Chair or Advisor provide the outcome and next steps.

Student Presentation

At the beginning of the oral exam the student may take the opportunity to expand on their answers to the written exam questions, amplifying the answers or outlining the key points. This speaking opportunity must take no longer than 15 minutes, and may be strictly oral or aided only by notes or a visual presentation (i.e., the student is not allowed to read a prepared paper). The student may bring into the oral examination only a copy of the written exam and the notes or software (e.g., PowerPoint) for the 15-minute presentation.

Marking the Examination

During the in-camera session of the examination, the faculty will evaluate the student's written and oral performance on each of the Major and Minor areas of focus. The student will be given one of three marks for each the Major and Minor. Faculty will assess the written and oral examination for each area as a combined mark.

- **Unconditional PASS:** The student's performance in the written and oral examination meets all the indicators. The examination milestone is considered met and a grade is assigned.
- **Conditional PASS:** The student's performance in the written and oral examination meets most of the indicators, but may need additional writing or revision to satisfy the committee. A student who receives the mark of Conditional PASS must complete revisions under the direction of the Advisor within two weeks. The committee will assess the revised responses and either provide the mark of FAIL or Unconditional PASS. Further oral examination is not required.
- **FAIL:** The student's performance in the written and oral examination does not meet the exam indicators above. A student who receives the mark of FAIL must withdraw from the program. UBC procedures for appeal of assigned academic standing are detailed in the Academic Regulations section of the UBC Calendar.

A student may receive a split decision for the Major and Minor areas; that is, the mark assigned may be different if the written or oral performance is inadequate in either area. If a student receives a Conditional PASS in either area, the numerical grade will be provided after the revision period. If a student receives a FAIL in either the Major or Minor area, the milestone is not met, and the student must withdraw from the program.

Grading LAIS 620 and 621

A student receives a grade for each of the Major (620) and Minor (621) area examinations. This grade is a score that reflects their combined written and oral performance. The examination grade constitutes 50% of the grade for the Major or Minor area, the other 50% being the score assigned for the exam preparation. The Advisor should bring the preparation scores to the in-camera session. The grades for preparation and examination are averaged and submitted to the Program Assistant using the grading form provided on the school's internal website.

A student who receives the mark of Unconditional PASS should receive a grade that is appropriate to their level of achievement, i.e., in the A to A+ range (85-95). A student who shows weaker performance in either the oral or written components, but not to the point where revision is necessary, may receive a lower grade. However, all grades for an Unconditional PASS must be above the B level (74+).

In the event the examination committee is unable to reach consensus on either the mark or numerical grade in the in-camera session, the DSC Chair (or their designate as examination chair) will serve as arbiter.

Adjournment of the Exam

An adjournment may occur when the examination process needs to be halted for additional preparation, or for personal reasons arising from the student's situation. There are two conditions under which the exam process may be halted or adjourned.

1. **Faculty requested adjournment:** If one or both examination essays are of an unacceptable quality, but there is confidence they can be improved with additional preparation, the chair of the examination committee may request an adjournment. This request should be made between the submission of the essays and the oral examination. The request should be made to the DSC Chair.
2. **Student requested adjournment:** If the student experiences a personal situation that puts their ability to complete the examination in question (significant illness, unexpected life incident, or emergency), they may request an adjournment. This request should be made during the writing period to the advisor and DSC Chair.

If an adjournment is granted, the student will have six months to complete the examination process. The student may not proceed to the oral examination until the written essays are deemed of sufficient quality. If the student does not produce passable essays on the second try,

the student will be given the mark of FAIL and must withdraw from the program. The student must be informed of the committee's decision in writing, and will have the opportunity to appeal to the DSC Chair. A candidate will be permitted to re-write the examination only once. The student is responsible for scheduling the re-writing.

Appealing the Examination Mark or Grade

All students can appeal the examination mark or numerical grade if they feel that the process for administration or assessment was unfair or in error. To appeal, the student must send a written note of appeal, along with any evidence to support their claim, to the DSC Chair within one week of receiving their examination feedback. The Chair will review the written essays and chair report to identify if any redress is appropriate. The outcome of the appeal will be provided to the student in writing no more than 30 days after receipt of the appeal.

Proposal Defence

Students demonstrate their ability to complete a sound project of original research by presenting and defending the dissertation proposal to their Dissertation Committee. The proposal defence should be completed within 30 months of initial registration, and must be completed within 36 months of initial registration. Once the Supervisor has approved the proposal, the other members of the Student's committee must be given time to review the proposal and must agree in writing that the student is ready to proceed to the defence (these discussions may occur over email). At that time, the Supervisor will contact the iSchool Program Assistant and DSC Chair to schedule the defence. The Dissertation Committee must unanimously approve the dissertation topic and research plan before the student may be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

The purposes of the defence are:

1. to ensure that the student has a clear understanding of the research he/she proposes to conduct,
2. to ensure that all Committee members have a clear conception of the research proposed,
3. to reach agreement on the methodology to be followed for the dissertation research, and
4. to ensure that all Committee members formally approve of the student's topic and research plan.

The Dissertation Committee must unanimously approve the dissertation topic and research plan before the student may be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. If the proposal is not approved by the student's Dissertation Committee, the student will be permitted to re-defend the proposal once. The candidate may modify or revise the written or presentation parts of the Defence, or both. Rejection of the Defence a second time will normally result in a recommendation to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies that the student's registration be terminated

Generative AI Tools & Dissertation Proposal

After familiarizing yourself with concerns and ethics regarding the use of GenAI for research and writing (see Qualifying Exam section of this Handbook), if you wish to use tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Co-Pilot for your research, drafting of and/or the preparation of your

dissertation proposal, you **must discuss this with your supervisor and committee members** before doing so to ensure there is agreement on the acceptable use of GenAI for your writing.

Your dissertation proposal must include a coversheet that addresses:

- If you **use GenAI tools** in the development of your proposal, you must name the specific tool (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Co-Pilot) and include a concise description of how this tool was used. This includes use of GenAI in the research, the drafting of, and/or the preparation of your dissertation proposal.
- If you do **not use GenAI tools** in the development of your dissertation proposal, please include a brief statement, "GenAI tools were not used in the development of my dissertation proposal".

Organization of the Research Proposal

The format guidelines stated below are intended to be flexible. The student, in consultation with the supervisor, is free to adapt the formatting as long as the content of the proposal is complete. A well-designed proposal should provide the basis for the first two or three chapters of the final dissertation. In most cases, the proposal should be at least 30 pages long.

The proposal should consist of:

1. Cover sheet with GenAI statement
2. Title page, with student's name, working title, and names of Committee members
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction, including an explanation of the Research Question
5. Literature review
6. Methodology
7. Information on issues relating to ethical review and their resolution, if applicable
8. Planning information – Timeline, itemized budget, if applicable, any other appropriate planning information
9. Reference list – Citations and references should be made in accordance with a recognized style manual, such as *APA*.

Presentation of the Proposal

The following guidelines apply to the presentation of the proposal:

1. The student should work with the supervisor on the initial draft of the proposal. Once the supervisor has approved the proposal for general distribution, the student should solicit feedback from the committee at large.
2. After the supervisor has approved the draft of the proposal for defence, the supervisor will ask the iSchool Program Assistant to contact the DSC Chair and each member of the student's committee to determine and schedule a time convenient for the defence. The Program Assistant will add the names of the student's committee to the Student Information Service Centre (SISC).

3. The student must deliver copies of the proposal to each member of his/her committee no later than two weeks before the scheduled defence.
4. The proposal defence will be scheduled to last 1–2 hours and will be chaired by the DSC Chair; if the Chair is unavailable or is a member of the Supervisory Committee, the meeting will be Chaired by another member of the DSC.
5. The student will give a 20 minute presentation at the beginning of the defence.
6. Members of the Committee will then provide comments and questions to the student.
7. To facilitate frank discussion of the defence, the student will be asked to leave the room while the committee comes to their determination.
8. Any concluding comments will be given directly to the student.
9. The supervisor will give to the student in written form all recommendations for changes to the proposal.
10. If the defence is successful, the Committee members will sign the "Dissertation Proposal Approval Form" located on the School of Information website on the [PhD Students page](#) and follow the instructions at the bottom of the form.

Dissertation Defence

A full description of the policies that apply to UBC dissertations and the oral defence can be found on the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website](#). The following key information is excerpted from those policies or is approved information not included in those policies.

The student must complete the defence within six years of initial registration. If the doctoral degree is not awarded within this period, the student's eligibility for the degree will be terminated and the student will be required to withdraw from the program. Under exceptional circumstances, extensions may be granted by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

When the final defence has been scheduled and before it has taken place, a "mock" defence will be held at the iSchool. The student will contact the DSC Chair to schedule the mock defence. The DSC Chair will chair the meeting. With the exception of the student's supervisor, the examiners for the final defence may not attend, but all other faculty members and students will be invited. The [iSchool Program Assistant](#) will assist with the scheduling and advertising of the event to faculty and PhD students.

The final oral examination or dissertation defence is open to all members of the university and to the public. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to announce the date and time of the defence and to invite members of the iSchool community to attend.

The final oral examination or dissertation defence is open to all members of the university and to the public. The examination can be scheduled no sooner than eight weeks after the submission of the approved thesis to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies strongly discourages the scheduling of defences during two blackout periods – the month of August and from December 15 to January 15. Specific information on the university's regulations regarding the oral defence can be found [here](#).

The dissertation must be presented according to the procedures and in the form as described by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website](#). A timeline and a plan of action may be planned using the [Doctoral Examinations Planning Tool and Checklist for Candidates and Supervisors](#).

The examination will be conducted by:

1. an external examiner, who may or may not attend the examination in person,
2. two university examiners, one of which must be from a department unaffiliated with the Student and Research Supervisor, and
3. a minimum of two to a maximum of three members of the candidate's dissertation committee.

A Chair will be appointed by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to chair the defence.

Following a successful PhD defence, the Supervisor will send a notice of the outcome to the iSchool Faculty and PhD Student lists and submit an announcement to the iSchool Digest. The Supervisor will coordinate with the iSchool Information Assistant to organize a tea to celebrate the successful program completion.

Status and Completion

On-leave Status

A student who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program may apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for on-leave status. Leave is granted when a student is best advised for personal, health, or other reasons to have time completely away from his/her academic responsibilities. Leave, not including parental leave, or leave to pursue concurrent programs is limited to one year (UBC Calendar, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). Further information regarding on-leave status can be found in the [UBC Calendar](#) and on the Graduate Studies website at www.grad.ubc.ca under "Current Students - Managing Your Program."

Statute of Limitations

A student is expected to complete all requirements for the degree within a period of six years from initial registration. Extenuating circumstances not of the student's making may justify allowing the student additional time to complete his or her degree program. A request for a one year's extension will be received favourably if it is fully justified and supported by the student's Graduate Program Advisor.

A student should discuss the possibility of an extension with his or her Supervisor and Graduate Advisor. Each request must be accompanied by a completed Request for Extension form and a memo justifying the request for extension, including a written report from the last Supervisory Committee meeting and a schedule (Extension Timeline) showing how the program will be completed in the extension period requested.

If a student fails to register for two consecutive terms, the student will be considered to have abandoned his or her program. In these cases, should the student wish to continue in the program, the student must re-apply for admission. In special cases, the student may be re-instated with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, in accordance with the Faculty Policy on Re-Instatement found on the Graduate Studies' website at www.grad.ubc.ca under "Managing your Program - Readmission & Reinstatement."

Voluntary Withdrawals

A student who wishes to withdraw voluntarily from the doctoral program must notify his/her supervisor in writing in order to obtain the approval of the dean, department head or Director, and the graduate adviser in the home department. Further information on the policies governing Withdrawals is available on the Graduate Studies website at www.grad.ubc.ca under "Current Students - Managing Your Program."