

3.6 Comprehensive Examinations

- A. [Scheduling Oral Examinations](#)
- B. [Master's Degree](#)
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A. ~~Scheduling Oral Examinations~~

~~1. Master's Students~~

~~Master's students schedule their oral examinations in consultation with their advisory committees. To do this, students must submit to the Graduate School a [Request for a Permit to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination](#) 10 working days prior to the date of the examination after approval from his/her Director of Graduate Programs (DGP). The 10-day period begins when all other requirements are in order, including a Patent Agreement that the student approves via Student Self Service in the [MyPack Portal](#).~~

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~~2. Doctoral Students~~

- ~~Doctoral students schedule their oral preliminary and final examinations in consultation with their advisory committees. Examinations of doctoral students are scheduled by the Graduate School after an appropriate request by the DGP. It is the responsibility of doctoral students to contact committee members and, where appropriate, the appointed Graduate School Representative to establish a date and time convenient to all members before officially requesting that the examination be scheduled. The Graduate School, upon approval, will send notification of the exam date to ~~each the individual~~ committee member and Graduate Representative. For both preliminary and final oral examinations, the Graduate School requires that DGPs submit a [Request to Schedule Doctoral Oral Examination](#) form ~~two weeks 10 working days~~ prior to the proposed exam date. ~~The two-week window does not commence until all other requirements are completed, including a final, approved Plan of Work and a Patent Agreement. The 10-day period will begin when all documents are in order, which includes an approved Plan of Graduate Work and a Patent Agreement that the student approves via Student Self Service in the [MyPack portal](#).~~~~

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- ~~It is the responsibility of the doctoral student to contact committee members and the previously appointed Graduate School Representative to establish a date and time convenient to each before officially requesting that the examination be scheduled. The student must also provide the ~~committee Representative~~ with a copy of the dissertation before the final examination, ~~recommended~~ two weeks prior, ~~but no less than one week~~.~~

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- ~~Students may find submission schedules on the [Schedule of Required Documents](#).~~

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~~A.B. Master's Degree~~

• **1. Written examinations (Optional)**

- ~~The A~~ degree program may require written examinations covering the subject matter of the major and the minor in which the student is enrolled. When required, such examinations must be successfully completed prior to the [submission of a Request for a Permit to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination](#). Information concerning written examination schedules should be obtained from the student's program.

• **2. Oral examinations**

- ~~Candidates for master's degrees, except those in Option B programs, must pass a comprehensive oral examination to demonstrate to the advisory committee that they/he/she possesses a reasonable mastery of the subject matter of the major and minor fields and that this knowledge can be used with promptness and accuracy.~~
- **(a) Scheduling of the exam.**
- ~~Master's students schedule their oral examinations in consultation with their advisory committees. To do this, students must submit a Request for a Permit to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination to their DGPs who approve and submit it to the Graduate School two weeks prior to the date of the examination. The two-week window does not commence until all other requirements are completed, including a final, approved Plan of Work and a Patent Agreement.~~
- ~~**(ba) Format of the exam.** Candidates for master's degrees, except those in Option B programs, must pass a comprehensive oral examination to demonstrate to the advisory committee that he/she possesses a reasonable mastery of the subject matter of the major and minor fields and that this knowledge can be used with promptness and accuracy.~~
- This exam takes the form of a traditional [thesis](#) defense ~~of the thesis~~ in those programs requiring theses. This examination may not be held until all other requirements, except completion of the ~~course work~~ [coursework](#) taken during the final semester, are satisfied. After obtaining DGP approval, a student must file a [Request for a Permit to Request to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination](#) with the Dean of the Graduate School only after the above conditions are met. [For students in non-thesis, non-Option B master's](#), the program determines the format of the oral exam.
 - [Throughout the process, the chair of the candidate's advisory committee has the obligation to maintain a scholarly atmosphere and to keep academic integrity and the student's best interest foremost.](#)
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- ~~**(cb) Passing the oral examination.** The Graduate School will determine whether the advisory committee and the courses taken by the student meet Graduate School requirements. If all requirements are met, the Request for a Permit to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination will be granted and a permit, entitled Admission to the Final Master's Oral Examination, will be forwarded to the DGP within 10 working days of receipt of the request. Upon receipt of this permit, the student may proceed to schedule the exam at a time that is agreed upon by all members of the advisory committee.~~
- In programs that require a thesis, ~~the thesis~~ it must be submitted in complete form, except for such revisions ~~which that~~ may be necessary as a result of the final oral

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exam, to all members of the advisory committee at least two (2) weeks prior to the exam.

- Within ~~a week five (5) working days~~ of completing the exam, the student's DGP must forward a permit form ([Admission to the Final Master's Oral Examination](#)) that displays the date that the exam was conducted, the result of the examination, and the signatures of all advisory committee members to the Dean of the Graduate School. *A unanimous vote of approval of the advisory committee is required for passing the oral examination.*
- **(c) Conditional Pass.**
 - Students may get a conditional pass contingent upon completion of additional work to the satisfaction of the advisory committee. A formal re-examination will not be required in this case. The DGP must notify the Graduate School [within a week after the exam of the conditional pass, the reasons for the conditional pass, and also](#) when the conditions ~~of the pass~~ have been removed. ~~(This notification is in addition to the notification of the conditional pass within five working days after the exam.)~~ The date upon which the Graduate School is notified of the pass establishes the student's graduation date.
- **(d) Failure to pass the oral examination.**
 - ~~A Failure of a student to pass who fails~~ the oral examination ~~is terminated from the student's~~ graduate work at NC State unless the graduate advisory committee unanimously ~~recommends requests~~ a re-examination. Only ~~a single one~~ re-examination will be ~~allowed given~~. If the ~~DGP or the~~ Graduate School denies the request, the student's program is terminated.

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C. Doctoral Degree

Preliminary examinations

Each doctoral student is required to take ~~a~~ preliminary examinations, consisting of written ~~examinations and an oral examination~~ components, ~~after they have completed the relevant coursework no earlier than the end of the second year of graduate study and not later than four calendar months before the final oral examination.~~ As indicated in Section 3.46, all doctoral students must attain candidacy for the degree within six ~~(6)~~ calendar years from the date of admission.

1. ~~Preliminary w~~Written examinations

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- **(a) Format of the exam.** The written portion of the examination may be conducted in one of two ways.
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 - (i) Each member of the advisory committee prepares a set of questions for the student's response, and the answers to each set are returned to the appropriate faculty member for ~~grading evaluation~~. The professor decides on the specific format of this exam.
 - (ii) Standardized departmental examinations may be used for all students in a program. These examinations are given at specified times during the

year, and scheduled dates ~~are~~ must be announced at least a semester well in advance. Where written departmental examinations of this kind are used, the student will be expected to make arrangements to schedule these examinations notify the department of their intent to sit for this examination.

- o Regardless of which method is employed, the questions involved may cover any phase of the ~~course work~~ coursework taken by the student during graduate study or any subject logically related to an understanding of the subject matter in the major and minor areas of study. The questions are designed to measure the student's mastery of his/her field and the adequacy of preparation for research. ~~Committee members must notify the DGP when a student has completed the written examination.~~
- o (b) Written examinations in the minor field. Requirements for written examinations in the minor field are left to the discretion of the program in which the student is minoring. (b) Notification of completion. Committee chair(s) must notify the DGP when a student has completed the written examination

(c) Failure to pass the written examination. Failure to pass the written portion terminates the student's work at this institution, subject to departmental and/or school/college policies with respect to re-examination.

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- **2. Preliminary oral examinations**

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- The oral examination is designed to test the student's ability to relate factual knowledge to specific circumstances, to use this knowledge with accuracy and promptness and to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the field of specialization and related areas.
- With approval from the DGP, upon satisfactory completion of the written portion of the preliminary examinations, and after completion of all course work relevant to the examination, the student DGP must submit a Request to Schedule the Doctoral Oral Examination, indicating that he/she wishes to schedule the preliminary oral examination. If the Graduate School Representative has already been assigned to the student's committee, then the Graduate School will responds to the request within one week five working days of its receipt in the Graduate School. If the Graduate School Representative has yet to be assigned, the Graduate School may take up to two weeks ~~10 working days~~ to respond to the request.
- After the Graduate School has approved the scheduling of the preliminary oral examination, the Records Unit mails the signed and dated request form is emailed to the committee chair, committee members, Graduate School Representative, and graduate student listed on the form. A file copy of the approved request form will be sent to the DGP.
- The Graduate School will notify the student and the examining committee. The oral examination is designed to test the student's ability to relate factual knowledge to specific circumstances, to use this knowledge with accuracy and promptness and to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the field of specialization and related areas.

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- (a) **Format of the examination.** Though the format of the oral preliminary examination may vary according to the culture of individual graduate programs, as a general guideline such examinations ~~may generally~~ include the following three elements.
 - (i) **Presentation by the candidate.** The candidate makes a presentation, ~~if appropriate,~~ of a research proposal ~~for the research work to be conducted.~~ This presentation may be open if the program wishes it to be, but NCSU graduate faculty may not be excluded, and the committee chair or Graduate School Representative can restrict the session as deemed necessary.
 - (ii) **Questioning of the candidate.** Anyone attending the presentation will be allowed to ask questions of the candidate at the conclusion of the presentation. ~~If the need arises, and the program feels it appropriate, graduate faculty members not on the advisory committee may meet in a restricted session after the presentation to ask additional questions of the student and express any concerns they have to the committee and student. Once the restricted session is concluded, the committee chair may reconvene the questioning phase in closed session in which the only the advisory committee questions the candidate.~~
 - (iii) **Deliberation and decision.** Only the advisory committee and the Graduate School Representative, if one has been appointed, will be allowed to participate in the deliberation and decision.
 - Throughout the process, the chair of the candidate's advisory committee has the obligation to maintain a scholarly atmosphere and to keep academic integrity and the student's best interest foremost.
- (b) **Outcome**

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- (i) **Passing the preliminary ~~oral~~ examination.** A unanimous vote of approval of the advisory committee is required for passing the ~~oral~~ preliminary examination. Approval may be conditionaled, however, and require on the students to's meeting specific requirements prescribed by their student's advisory committee. These conditions must be written in a clear and distinct way and communicated in such a manner that the student clearly understands what is expected; they must also be submitted to the DGP and the Graduate School.

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- (ii) **Failure to pass the preliminary ~~oral~~ examination.**
 - A student who fails the preliminary examination is terminated from graduate work at NC State unless the graduate advisory committee unanimously requests a re-examination. Only a single re-examination will be allowed; it can encompass written, oral, or both components as determined by the advisory committee. If the DGP or the Graduate School denies the request, the student's program is terminated.
 - Failure of a student to pass the preliminary oral examination terminates his or her work at this institution unless the advisory committee recommends

~~a re-examination. No re-examination may be held until one full semester has elapsed and only one re-examination is permitted.~~

3. Candidacy

- ~~A doctoral student is admitted to candidacy by the Graduate School upon successfully passing the preliminary examinations. This does not include students receiving a 'conditional pass'.~~

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- **4. Final Oral Examination**
- As with the preliminary oral examination, the chair of the student's advisory committee ~~is in charge of~~ oversees conducting the final oral examination. ~~S-~~The students in consultation with their advisors, through the DGP, submit a **Request to Schedule the Doctoral Oral Examination to their DGP**, indicating that ~~they~~he/she wishes to schedule the final oral examination.
- The final oral examination is scheduled after the dissertation is complete except for such revisions as may be necessary as a result of the examination, ~~but not earlier than four calendar months after admission to candidacy and~~ but not before all required ~~course work~~ coursework has been completed ~~or is currently in progress.~~
- ~~If the Graduate School Representative has already been assigned to the student's committee, then the Graduate School responds to the request within five (5) working days of its receipt. If a Graduate School Representative must be assigned, the Graduate School may take up to ten (10) working days to respond to the request. The student has the responsibility of contacting the Graduate School Representative when scheduling the final examination.~~
- After the Graduate School has approved the scheduling of the final oral examination, ~~the signed and dated request form is emailed~~ the Records Unit mails the signed and dated request form to the committee chair, committee members, Graduate School Representative, and graduate student listed on the form. A file copy of the approved request form will be sent to the DGP.
- The student should be sure to include the most current title of the dissertation, as the Graduate School mails information about the scheduled examination to the NC State Official Bulletin for publication.
- - **(a) Format of final examination.** Though the format of the doctoral examination may vary according to the culture of individual graduate programs, all examinations include three elements:-
 - **(i) Presentation by the candidate.** The candidate typically presents the methodology used, the data collected, and the conclusions reached as reported in the dissertation. For the purpose of dissemination of research, it is required that the presentation of the dissertation be open to the university community.
 - **(ii) Questioning of the candidate.** Any member of the university community is allowed to ask questions of the candidate. ~~If the need arises, graduate faculty members not on the advisory committee may meet in a restricted session after the presentation to ask additional questions of the~~

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~~student and express any concerns they have to the committee and student.~~
The questioning phase may continue with a closed session in which the advisory committee questions the candidate.

- **(iii) Deliberation and decision.** Only the advisory committee and the Graduate School ~~R~~~~representative e, if one has been appointed,~~ are present.
- Throughout the process, the chair of the candidate's advisory committee has the obligation to maintain a scholarly atmosphere and to keep academic integrity and the student's best interest foremost.
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- **(b) Outcome of final examination**

- **(i) Passing the final oral examination.** A unanimous vote of approval of the advisory committee is required ~~for to~~ ~~pass ing~~ the final oral examination. ~~Approval may be conditioned, however, on the student's meeting specific requirements prescribed by the student's advisory committee. In the case of a conditional pass, the specific requirements must be submitted to the student as well as the Graduate School attached to the Exam Results form. Final approval by the advisory committee is dependent upon a student's successful completion of those conditions.~~
- **(ii) Failure to pass the final oral examination.** ~~Failure of a student to~~ ~~Should a student fail the final examination, pass the examination terminates his or her work at this~~ ~~terminates a student's academic program institution unless the advisory committee recommends a re-examination. No re-examination may be given until one full semester has elapsed and only one re-examination is permitted.~~

D. Format for Remote Oral Exams

It is expected that oral examinations be conducted with all parties in the same room; however, it is recognized that circumstances may prevent this from happening. While technology can provide solutions for such situations, it should never be the case that remote exams are held simply as a matter of convenience. The student and major professor must be present in person.

When ~~members attend remote~~ ~~examinations remotely do become necessary,~~ it is the responsibility of the chair ~~(or co-chairs, if appropriate)~~ of the committee to maintain the academic integrity of the exam and to ensure that the spirit of the requirements outlined in 3.6.B- or 3.6.C- above are followed. The technology used ~~shall must~~ allow all parties to interact ~~to the extent necessary-visually and aurally~~ to accomplish this. Failure of the technology during the exam will require that the exam be suspended until it is in functioning order or rescheduled for a later time.

It is the ~~DGP's~~ responsibility ~~of the Director of Graduate Programs~~ to ensure that the reasons for a remote exam are valid, and to submit a request to conduct the exam to ~~the~~ Graduate School, in conjunction with the Request for a Permit to Schedule the Master's ~~Oral Examination~~ or ~~Request to Schedule~~ Doctoral Oral Examination.

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