

## Guidelines for PhD comprehensive exams

April 2016

Our regulations indicate the following:

- Two comprehensive exams, first on Theory (DVM 9996), second on Policy and Practice (DVM9997).
  - In each exam, at least one question will be on the student's area of interest (one of our 4 themes), linked to either Theory or Policy/Practice.
  - Students need to have completed coursework to register for first comp, and pass the first to register for the second.
  - Registration for the first comp should be in the third session (i.e., summer of first year).
  - Each comp will have a written and an oral component.
  - Grading will be done on a pass/fail basis.
  - An exam can be retaken once; a second failure results in withdrawal from the program.
  - Evaluation will be done by a committee of three professors, at least two of whom are regular faculty of the School of International Development and Global Studies.
1. The learning objectives of the comps are (i) to achieve mastery of the field and its key literatures; and (ii) for the student to situate his/her own research interests in that literature.
  2. The written component of each exam will require the student to answer two questions. (i) A broad question on development theory or policy and practice. Students will be given three questions from which they can choose one to answer. To the extent possible, the same questions will be offered to students enrolled in the French and English programs. However, because of differences in the literatures and debates in the two languages, there may be differences in the questions for the two language groups. Where there are differences, the general-question examiners and the PhD coordinator will assess them to ensure that the exams are as comparable as possible, in terms of comprehensiveness and difficulty. All students in each language group will be given the same three questions. (ii) A specific question linking the student's area of interest with the broader literature on development theory or policy and practice. There will be no choice for this question.
  3. The comprehensive exam questions will be provided to the students 3 days prior to the due date of each comprehensive exam. This timing will apply to all three exam periods during the academic year. In advance of each exam period, instructions will be provided to students on the exact timing of when the questions will be transmitted and the answers are required. Transmission of both questions and answers will be electronic. The written exam submission (both questions combined) must be no more than 7,000 words (approx. 15 pages. Times New Roman, 11 font, single spaced, 2.54 cm margins on all sides).

4. Before the oral exam, the student will be given written feedback on his/her performance on the written exam. This will not be a formal grading but will provide a general assessment, including identification of areas of the exam where the student could improve.
5. The oral component will occur after the written component has been evaluated by the Examination Committee. The coverage of the oral exam will be the same as the written exam: development theory or policy and practice, as a broad field; and linking the student's area of interest with the broader literature on development theory or policy and practice. The oral exam will be an opportunity for the Committee to get additional appreciation of the student's mastery of the relevant literature; for the Committee and the student to clarify questions that may have emerged in the written component; and for the student to demonstrate his/her competence in terms of oral communication of scholarly material. Up to two hours will be allocated for the oral component.
6. As per FGPS regulations, official university grading of the comprehensive exams will be Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. However, for internal purposes, the School will assign one of three grades to the comprehensive exams: Pass with Distinction/Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. The grade for each comprehensive exam will be based on a weighting of 70/30 for the written and oral components, respectively. Students will receive a written assessment with their grading.
7. The Examination Committee for all students will normally include the two professors who have taught the core course in the fall session preceding the exams (for DVM9996, this will be DVM8109/8509; for DVM9997, this will be DVM8110/8510). If one or both are unavailable, the Examination Committee may be composed of the current year's instructors or any regular faculty member with extensive knowledge of development theory or policy and practice. Nominations will be made by the PhD committee. The third member of a student's evaluation committee will normally be the student's supervisor. Where the supervisor is one of the professors who taught the core course, or where there is some reason why the supervisor should not or cannot serve, the third committee member will be nominated by the PhD committee, in consultation with the professors who taught the core course. In accordance with the program regulations, at least two members of the Examination Committee will be regular faculty members of the School of International Development and Global Studies.
8. The responsibilities of the Examination Committee will include finalizing the required reading list for the comp, preparing the exam questions, participating in the oral component, and grading the students. The two professors who taught the core course will normally take the lead in preparing the three broad questions. The supervisor will take the lead, in consultation with the other two professors, in preparing the student-specific question on field of interest. The supervisor should also consult with other professors in the relevant thematic area in developing the required readings for this student-specific question. S/he can also include input from the student. At least three months before the written exam will be taken, students will be given the required reading list for both the general and student-specific questions. There may be differences in the English- and French-language lists.

9. The PhD Program Coordinator and PhD Committee will provide recommendations to faculty members to facilitate greater consistency in reading list page lengths and comprehensive exam questions.
10. Each year, there will be three exam periods. In the first, the written exam will be held in the second half of August or early in September, with the oral component approximately two weeks later. In the second, the written component will be held in the second half of November or early in December, with the oral component approximately two weeks later. In the third, the written component will be held in the second half of March or early in April, with the oral component approximately two weeks later. The exact dates will be finalized by the beginning of the semester when the exam will occur. Normally, the theory exam will be held in the first period and the policy and practice exam in the second. Students who are retaking an exam or undertaking a deferred exam can do so in any of the three periods.