

Information for Doctoral Students in Analytical Chemistry
Procedure for the Oral Comprehensive Examination
Revised September 22, 2008

Once Ph.D. aspirants have completed the required curriculum, the requisite number of cumulative examinations (cumes), and the FLORS requirement, they are eligible to schedule the Oral Comprehensive Examination. Aspirants for the Ph.D. in Chemistry must pass this examination before the beginning of the fourth year of graduate study. Aspirants who fail to meet this requirement will be ineligible for support through Departmental or research funds until this requirement is passed. The Oral Comprehensive Exam will consist of two parts; (1) presentation of the aspirant's research progress toward their dissertation, and (2) defense of an independent proposal written by the aspirant on an assigned topic related to their research. Once an aspirant has satisfied the cumulative exam requirement, they should meet with the Chemistry Department Graduate Secretary to complete the Application for Comprehensive Oral Examination, and then meet with their research advisor to determine the timing of the oral comprehensive exam.

Committee

Committee members should include four members of the Analytical Division and one faculty member from outside the Chemistry Department. The Analytical Division Secretary will select the four committee members from the Division on a random rotating basis from the Analytical faculty immediately following successful completion of the cumulative exams, and designate one of these four members as Chair of the committee. The outside member will be selected by the four Analytical members. The Chair will contact the outside member to confirm her/his willingness to serve. Persons collaborating with the aspirant or the advisor will not be considered for any of the member positions. The Analytical Division Secretary will notify the aspirant and advisor of the composition of the Orals committee. The aspirant will be responsible for contacting the committee members to schedule both the research presentation and the defense of proposal, and for reserving an Analytical Seminar time and a room for the defense of proposal.

Exam Format

1. Once the committee has been selected, and the aspirant has negotiated a date for the presentation with the committee, the aspirant will contact the Division Secretary to reserve a one-hour session of the Analytical Seminar Series for their research presentation. This presentation should take place before the end of the fifth semester of the aspirant's doctoral program. The aspirant should plan for a 25-30 minute presentation followed by 20-25 minutes of questions and discussion, totaling not more than 50 minutes. The aspirant should present a succinct summary of their research progress and a plan for the future direction of their research. In preparing for this portion of the exam, it is important that the aspirants put their research in context, demonstrate a command of the relevant literature, and be prepared to use the chalkboard while answering questions.
2. One week prior to the presentation, the aspirant will submit the following electronically to the Division Secretary:
 - A research abstract written by the aspirant, no more than 2 pages in length,
 - The aspirant's most recent ARTS form, and
 - A Curriculum Vita, no more than 2 pages in length.

One week prior to the presentation, the aspirant's advisor will submit electronically to the Division Secretary a letter describing the aspirant's research and evaluating their performance. The Division Secretary will distribute these four documents to the committee members. The presentation will be

open to the public, and will be followed by a deliberation meeting attended by the committee members only. The aspirant's advisor is encouraged to attend the presentation, but will not be allowed to answer questions unless directed to her/him by the committee. The advisor may ask questions. The advisor will not attend the committee deliberation following the research presentation. During the closed deliberation, the committee will decide whether the aspirant will (1) proceed to the defense of the independent proposal, or (2) repeat the presentation of research. The committee will summarize their recommendation, including strengths and weaknesses of the presentation, and submit this summary to the aspirant and the advisor. If the committee recommends repeat of the presentation, the process described above will be repeated.

3. If the committee recommends the aspirant for the second phase of the oral exams, the Division Secretary will provide the aspirant with a topic for the independent proposal exactly one month prior to their exam. The topic will be generated by the advisor with the input and agreement of the orals committee. The Committee Chair will forward the approved topic to the Division Secretary.

The aspirant will then prepare a novel and creative research proposal (as described in the Chemistry Department Graduate Student Handbook, <http://www.chem.ku.edu/graduate/gradinfo/oralguidelines.shtml>) based on this topic. The advisor will not assist the aspirant in any way in the preparation of this proposal, nor will the advisor attend the defense of the proposal. One week prior to the defense, the aspirant will submit their proposal electronically to the Division Secretary for distribution to the committee.

4. The aspirant will present and defend the research proposal to the committee at the oral examination. Although the research proposal will normally be a major portion of the oral examination, the committee may also examine the aspirant on more general subject areas (not necessarily related to the proposal) or on his/her current research activities.
5. Total time allowed for the oral exam is 2 hours. The grade on this examination will be "Honors", "Satisfactory", or "Unsatisfactory". If the aspirant receives a grade of "Unsatisfactory" on the comprehensive oral examination, he or she may be allowed upon the recommendation of the Department, to repeat it; but under no circumstances may the aspirant take it more than twice. In any case, the examination may not be repeated until at least 90 days have elapsed since the last unsuccessful attempt.

Research Advisory Committee

Immediately after each student in the Ph.D. program passes his/her oral comprehensive examination, the student together with the research advisor will select an appropriate research advisory committee of at least three faculty members (including the research director) who will meet within two months of the date of the oral comprehensive examination. Normally, the research advisor will chair the committee.

Dissertation Committee

Following the meeting with the research advisory committee, the candidate shall recommend in consultation with the research advisor a dissertation committee to the Graduate School. That committee should normally include the three members of the candidate's research advisory committee. (All members of the committee are to be members of the Graduate Faculty. A member of the committee from outside the University will become an ad hoc member of the Graduate Faculty.)