

## Guidelines on Comprehensive Research and Examination (2023)

Doctoral students in the Graduate Program in Critical Disability Studies (CDIS) must complete comprehensive requirements prior to commencing their proposal & dissertation. The comprehensive research and examination are a pedagogical exercise that requires candidates to engage in written and oral focused academic inquiry on a topic or problem of interest that extends the bounds of coursework and moves toward the conceptual work of the dissertation. **Each doctoral student is responsible to submit the Notification of PhD Comprehensive Paper Supervisors form to the Graduate Program Office before they engage in this requirement.**

The comprehensive requirement allows students to demonstrate their readiness to undertake independent dissertation research. Each component will have an equal weighting, and a single integrated outcome will be provided (i.e., pass or fail). Upon successful completion of the written portion there is an oral exam; its purpose is to demonstrate competence and to allow for questions, reflections & clarifications as needed. Completion is meant to demonstrate their comprehensive understanding of a major and minor field within Critical Disability Studies.

## Comprehensive Supervisory Committee Approval and Form

All faculty in the Critical Disability Studies Graduate Program, including Adjunct Faculty, and Professor Emeritus who have retained appointments at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, are eligible to supervise comprehensive papers.

(Note: For doctoral dissertations, all faculty in the Critical Disability Studies Graduate Program can serve on supervisory and examining committees. However, not all of them are eligible to be a Principal Supervisor; a Full-status appointment at the Faculty of Graduate Studies is required. Refer to the Critical Disability Studies Handbook for a listing of supervisory eligibility.)

Prior to commencing the work on any comprehensive paper, students are required to submit the **Notification of PhD Comprehensive Paper Supervisors form (in advance)** to the Critical Disability Studies Graduate Program Office ([gradcds@yorku.ca](mailto:gradcds@yorku.ca)) to obtain approval of the Graduate Program Director. If there is a change in supervisor, the student must consult with the Graduate Program Director and submit a Change in PhD Comprehensive Supervisor Committee form to the Graduate Program Office.

### **1) Academic Milestone and Scheduling**

Excluding exceptional circumstances, scheduling of the written comprehensive requirement proceeds in line with the 20-day notification period per FGS regulations & is communicated to all parties. Upon successful completion of the written comprehensive requirements there is an oral examination. **As of Fall 2023, completion of the comprehensive research and examination is an academic milestone that must begin in Year 2 and aim to be completed in first term of Year 3 (Term 7).**

Scheduling of the oral examination occurs when the supervisors deem the work to meet academic standards. The comprehensive supervisors consult with student for a date and time and contacts the Graduate Program Office to schedule the meeting logistics. Scheduling information will ordinarily

be provided to students and participating faculty at least 20 business days in advance of the written and oral exam. If an examination must be rescheduled, students and all faculty members involved will normally be informed no later than 5 business days prior to the examination date. Unique circumstances such as the availability of ASL interpreters mean that there will be times when scheduling is adversely affected. All scheduling and re-scheduling is done in consultation with the student and committee to confirm availability.

All comprehensive requirements will ordinarily be completed by the end of term seven. Students are encouraged to begin planning and preparing for their first comprehensive well before CDIS deadlines.

## 2) Format and Structure

The comprehensive examination is a pedagogical exercise that requires candidates to engage in written and oral focused academic inquiry on a topic or problem of interest that extends the bounds of coursework and moves toward the conceptual work of the dissertation. Each component will have an equal weighting, and a single integrated outcome will be provided (i.e., pass or fail). Upon successful completion of the written portion there is an oral exam; its purpose is to demonstrate competence and to allow for questions, reflections & clarifications as needed.

The PhD in Critical Disability Studies is unique in Canada and offers three possible fields for study; students will select their major & minor field from the following:

- critical theory
- social policy
- human rights & social justice

The comprehensive requirement takes the form or its equivalent of **two** 25-page essays unless otherwise negotiated between the student and their supervisor. Each of the comprehensives is supervised by a faculty member appointed to the Critical Disability Studies Graduate Program. Ideally each written comprehensive paper will be completed in one semester; the oral exam will take place either at the end of or beginning of the next semester **but no later than the beginning of term seven.**

The comprehensive requirement can take special formats such as but not limited to:

1. syllabus \ mini lecture & teaching materials related to teaching interests
2. research creation - including practice lead research, practice-based research or any research practices that advance knowledge using the arts, broadly defined.
3. artistic works \ documentation \ chap books \ zines \ with relevant context (theoretical \ historical...) materials
4. overview of methods & methodologies re knowledge transfer & exchange (for instance land-based \ community inclusive \ arts inclusive)
5. a paper \ project \ policy to be decided upon in consultation with the student's supervisors.

One comprehensive field essay may be replaced with a publication in process. The supervising faculty member will provide support and guidance around the publication & peer review process.

## Reading Lists:

**Students are expected to work in conjunction with their supervisors to produce their individualized lists for each of the comprehensive papers.** This enables students to

explore and create a list based on their understanding of their fields of study. Students can include a wide variety of readings, including those that are beyond any one theoretical orientation, to ensure that the diversity of ideas that make up the breadth and depth of the field are incorporated. Students are expected and required to go beyond the areas with which they are most familiar, to obtain a broad, comprehensive knowledge of the field of Critical Disability Studies.

Readings for comprehensive papers are composed by the student as they survey the literature for each field in accordance with their research interests and focus. The reading lists are then revised in consultation with each comprehensive paper's supervisor. Reading lists will vary by student and it is rare that two reading lists will be comparable. Your reading lists for each comp can be started early. Maintain a list of books and articles you have read or would like to read, texts that professors and colleagues remark on and in which of the two comprehensive lists they could be included. There will be some overlap across the exams, but it will likely be less than 10% of the texts. When a draft of the lists has been completed you will submit them to each comprehensive supervisor to assess whether they have additional recommendations.

### **3) Accessibility and accommodations**

CDIS is committed to work with students to ensure access and accommodations. Students requiring accommodations to fulfill comprehensive requirements are urged to have a discussion with the Graduate Program Director prior to or when they meet to review their first annual PhD Report on Academic Progress, and their comprehensive supervisors once they are secured. In addition, the student accessibility services office at the university may be consulted.

Doctoral students with disabilities are to be mindful that they must complete the comprehensive papers and examination to allow time to complete their next milestone and have an approved dissertation proposal by Term 9 (end of Year 3). If the academic milestones are not completed, an advising block is placed to necessitate a meeting with the supervisor and Graduate Program Director and student. Academic accommodations may adjust the expected rate of progress for some students with disabilities, however **all doctoral students** are expected to meet the comprehensive paper and examination deadlines.

### **4) Evaluation & outcome**

The comprehensive examination committee includes two supervisors who are responsible for evaluating the student. The comprehensive requirement is composed of two parts: written and oral. The oral comprehensive will be scheduled when the supervisors consider the written components to have passed & the student has exhibited competence in the minor and major fields.

The oral exam is a 90-minute closed exam scheduled when the faculty supervisors have approved the written component. Prior to scheduling the oral exam, the student will send copies of their approved papers to the Graduate Program Director, and both field supervisors.

The oral exam has as its focus the written components. In the exam the student presents a 10–15-minute overview of their comprehensive papers after which there are two rounds of questions. The oral examination evaluation is based upon the student's demonstration of competence, awareness of current debates, gaps, and research in their major and minor fields.

The oral exam will be chaired by the GPD or representative (non-voting)

The comprehensive requirement is assessed by the supervisors using one of the following

categories:

- pass
- fail

If there is a split vote the Graduate Program Director or designate will confer with faculty supervisors and cast the deciding vote. Should the student fail, they will be given one opportunity to retake the oral exam within three months; areas for improvement will be clearly laid out by the committee. A second failure will result in removal from the program.

Upon successful completion of the oral examination, the student will submit final e-copies of the comprehensive requirement and the comprehensive supervisors complete and submit the **PHD Comprehensive Examination Evaluation form** to the Graduate Program Office ([gradcds@yorku.ca](mailto:gradcds@yorku.ca)), for the program record.

## **5) Procedures for updating graduate milestone examinations**

The policies and procedures for updating milestone examinations will be revised as needed and/or during the cyclical program review.

NB: current students will have the choice of proceeding under the comprehensive requirements from the Year they entered (three papers) or to opt for completion under the revised guidelines (two papers).

Successful completion of the oral discussion qualifies students to begin their dissertation proposal or proceed to their proposal defence, if the comprehensive committee will also serve as the dissertation committee, and the proposal has already been approved. Please note that students who plan to continue working with the same committee for their dissertation may begin work on their proposal once their comprehensive papers have been approved. Once their proposal has been approved (by Term 9), students may choose to schedule the comprehensive exam and proposal defence for the same day if the committee agrees.