

**Instructions for PhD Candidacy Examinations**  
**Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research**

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**I. Purpose of Candidacy Examinations**

The candidacy examination in WSFR is intended to provide students with the opportunity to map, and demonstrate mastery of, the fields of expertise that will inform their independent doctoral research. Students have two options for the candidacy examination. The first option is to develop two course outlines, one aimed at the second year level in an area that broadly informs their research, and one at the fourth year level in an area that more specifically addresses their research topic. The second option is to develop one course outline at the second year level in an area that broadly informs their research and one research paper in an area that more specifically addresses their research topic. Both options must be approved the student's supervisor and Graduate Chair. A secondary goal of the candidacy examination process is to provide students with the experience of developing at least one course outline that reflects their areas of expertise. The assessment of the course outlines in the oral candidacy examinations should focus primarily on demonstrating knowledge of the fields identified by the students' course outline/s rather than the students' pedagogical skills or teaching philosophy. Students choosing the course outline in combination with the research paper may design the paper in a way that helps them develop expertise and depth in a specific area related to their research and that supports their professional development and progression to the preparation of their thesis proposal. In keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of our program, the research paper may take different forms depending on the student's needs, including a draft manuscript that the student can submit for peer-review. Once a student has successfully passed their examination, the student is considered a "candidate" for the PhD, or, is "ABD" (has completed "all" their degree requirements "but the dissertation").

**II. Process of Candidacy Examinations**

- **Develop and Approve Topics:** The student, in consultation with the supervisor, decides on the topics for two course outlines/course outline and research paper. Students opting to do two course outlines must include one 0.5 general level second- year lecture course and one 0.5 fourth-year seminar. Students may opt to replace the 0.5 fourth-year seminar course with a research paper. Consideration should be given to how the topics of the course outlines/course outline and research paper relate to the dissertation (How will the process of preparing the course outlines support the development of the thesis proposal? In what areas does the student need support to move their work forward?). It is the responsibility of the supervisor to work with the student to develop, focus and approve the course outline/research paper topics. *The candidacy exam topics should be approved by the student's supervisor by May 31 of year 1.* The student should prepare a summary of the candidacy exam topics (3-4 pages) that includes:
  - (i) the working titles of the course/research paper;
  - (ii) a summary of the scope of the course/research paper;
  - (iii) a preliminary reading list (10-15 references for the course outline/research paper); and
  - (iv) how the proposed course outline/research paper relate to the student's dissertation.
- **Establish Candidacy Exam Committee:** A committee of three members (including the supervisor) is established by mid-June of year 1. The role of the committee members is to support the development of and participate in the oral examination of the approved course outlines. Members should be chosen to fill gaps required to assist in the development of the course outlines. *At least one member of the*

committee should be a core member of WSFR. The supervisor (with the assistance of the Grad Chair if necessary) contacts the committee members and provides them with the candidacy exam outline prepared by the student. Candidacy exam committee members should meet with the student and supervisor to review and discuss the candidacy exam outline and indicate their approval of the course outlines/research paper by signing and dating the Candidacy Exam Topics Approval form. This form must also be approved by the Graduate Chair. The student will have five months from the date this form is signed to submit their course outlines/course outline and research paper. A provisional examination date will be set, no later than 2 weeks after the course outlines/course outline and research paper are submitted.

- Consultation with Committee Members: Students may consult with committee members in developing their course outlines/course outline and research paper. It is up to individual committee members to decide how they would like to be involved with students as they develop their course outlines/course outline and research paper. Members may provide feedback on the approved course outline/course outline and research paper in an individual meeting with the student or in a committee meeting arranged by the student or the supervisor. Student consultation with committee members should be undertaken with the understanding that it is the student's responsibility to conceptualize and develop their full course outlines. It is recommended that individual committee members meet no more than twice with the student during the development of their course outlines.
- Submission of Candidacy Exam Materials: Typically, there should be at least two weeks and no longer than one month in between the submission of the course outlines/course outline and research paper and the candidacy examination date. *The final course outlines/course outline and research paper should be approved as ready for examination by the student's supervisor by November 30 of year 2.*
- Exam and Evaluation: The student will meet with the candidacy examination committee. The candidate will be invited to give an oral presentation of 5-10 minutes (maximum). This will be followed by two rounds of questions by the three members of the committee. Committee members will be allowed to question the student for 20 minutes (maximum) in the first round and 10 minutes (maximum) in the second round. The supervisor will act as Chair to ensure these time limits. In keeping with the purpose of the exam, questions should focus primarily on demonstrating knowledge of the fields of expertise they have included in their course outlines outlines/course outline and research paper; pedagogical issues may be pursued with regard to course outlines but should be considered secondary in importance. The student will be evaluated according to the following: pass, pass with minor revisions, major revisions with re-examination. The supervisor will record and oversee any required minor revisions, which will be completed by the student within two weeks of the examination date. Students who are required to make major revisions will be given one opportunity to revise and resubmit their candidacy exam within a time frame determined by the examination committee. Students who do not pass the exam upon re-examination will be required to withdraw from the program. The examination form must be completed and signed by the supervisor and examiners and submitted to the Grad Chair.

Forms are found on the WSFR website at:

[http://uwo.ca/womens/graduate/phd\\_program/requirements.html](http://uwo.ca/womens/graduate/phd_program/requirements.html)

### III. Content and Format of Candidacy Examinations

#### (i) Course Outlines

It is important to recognize that the primary purpose of the candidacy exam is to support the development of the student's research. In this regard, for example, the annotated course outlines enable the student to situate their work within broader fields of scholarly research (year 2 course) and to explore particular aspects of their research in depth (year 4 course). Course outlines should be double spaced, with the exception of the bibliography (#6), which may be single spaced. The total length for each course should be no more than 32 pages double-spaced, not including the bibliography (#6).

In designing their course outlines, students may choose to take advantage of the workshops in course outline design offered by the Teaching Support Centre. Students may have their course outlines considered as potential offerings in the Department's undergraduate program and may have an opportunity to teach a course they have designed in year three or four of their program.

Each course outline will consist of the following sections:

1. An introductory statement on the general subject area of the course and discussion of why the course is important and the contribution the course makes to the field/s of one or more of the following: women's studies, feminist research, gender studies, sexuality studies (1 page max.)
2. A statement of the relationship between the course and the proposed dissertation (3 pages max.)
3. A description of the learning objectives for the course (1 page max.)
4. An outline of the methods of assessment, including mark breakdown and an explanation of how the methods of assessment will fulfill the course objectives and facilitate student learning (1 page max.)
5. A weekly breakdown of course readings with annotations (assuming 3 hour classes and 13 weeks). The annotations should provide enough depth to demonstrate the student's understanding of the course material. Annotations should also include a concise explanation of why the readings were selected and consider briefly how they will contribute to achieving the stated learning objectives. (13-26 pages max.)
6. A bibliography of works the student consulted in developing the course outlines, in addition to the assigned readings (5-8 pages, max.)

#### (ii) Research Paper

The research paper should be prepared alongside the second-year course outline (see above). Whereas the course outline demonstrates breadth of knowledge in the general areas in which the student's doctoral research is situated, the research paper should demonstrate depth of knowledge of a specific area or topic that is related to the student's doctoral research. The research paper could take a variety of forms, in keeping with the interdisciplinary focus of the program, and in order to facilitate student progression in relation to the student's discipline/s and goals. One option is to draft a manuscript related to the student's doctoral research that could be submitted for peer review. Other options may also be identified by the student in consultation with the supervisor and the candidacy examination committee.

The research paper should include an introduction that lays out the focus of the paper and the presented arguments, and should clearly indicate the contribution the paper makes to one or more of

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the following fields: women's/gender studies, feminist research, sexuality studies. The paper should also consider the relationship between the focus of the paper and the student's doctoral research.

The research paper should be double spaced, with the exception of the bibliography, which may be single spaced. The research paper should be no less than 25 pages and no more than 30 pages double-spaced, not including the bibliography.