



**Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine**  
Guidelines to the Chair for PhD Comprehensive Examinations

1. The Chair represents the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Department at the Comprehensive Examination. This person is typically the same person who chairs the student's Supervisory Committee. It is the Chair's responsibility to determine that the work presented is entirely that of the student. Furthermore, it should be established that the proposed studies are not being conducted by the candidate or other lab workers or close collaborators.
2. The candidate will arrange the time, location, and date of the examination. The Pathology Graduate Studies Coordinator will send an examination reminder to all Committee members two weeks before the day of the exam. The quorum for the exam consists of two external examiners (one of these a member of PALM) and one Committee member (not including the supervisor). The only parties present should be the Committee Members, Supervisor, and Candidate, as this is not a public exam.
3. The Chair should introduce all members of the Examination Committee, the Supervisor and the candidate. ***The Chair should remind the Committee of the unique nature of the Comprehensive Examination in the PALM program, in comparison to other programs. The Chair should remind the committee about the STEP and LEAP options, which was chosen by the candidate, and how this may influence evaluation of the candidate. The Chair should also remind the Committee of the role of the Supervisor in the Comprehensive Examination.*** Announce that this is a PhD Comprehensive Examination for the candidate and ask that all electronic communication devices be turned off and not used during the exam. Also inform the room that in accordance with PALM Graduate Program policy, the examination is not to be recorded.
4. The Chair will ensure that the student should present the research proposal in 20 minutes. Warn the candidate at 20 minutes that they have 2 minutes left. The Chair must stop the presentation at 22 minutes.
5. The Chair should establish the order of questioning with external examiners first and direct the questions so that each of the examiners is given two rounds of 15-20 minutes each. The Chair should briefly record the types of examiner's questions and candidate's ability to respond.
6. At the end of the examination, the candidate is asked to leave the room. An initial closed-door discussion is held to allow the Supervisor to provide an opinion. The Supervisor will then be asked to leave until a consensus of opinion is reached by the Examination Committee. This will fall into one of the following categories: **Pass/Fail/Conditional Pass**. If a consensus of opinion is not reached, the Chair will have the authority to cast a deciding vote as part of the process. If the decision is a Conditional Pass, the Committee must recommend ways of correcting the deficiencies. As examples, remedial and



supplementary responsibilities for the student to attempt earning a passing rank may include: coursework, a journal club presentation that focuses on a specific area, rewriting parts or all of the proposal. When establishing a deadline for completion of these conditions, the Chair must observe the candidacy deadline. In the event of a fail, the student will have one opportunity to redo the complete exam prior to the G+PS deadline for candidacy. The examination committee for a repeat examination can consist of new external examiners if desired.

7. The candidate and Supervisor are recalled into the room and the decision is given in front of the Examination Committee.
8. It is [the responsibility of the Chair to complete and submit the report linked here](#) to the Pathology and Laboratory Graduate Studies Coordinator summarizing the examination, including:
  - a. The composition of the Committee
  - b. A statement that the candidate attests that the work is entirely their own and that the experiments are not being currently carried out in the host laboratory or in that of a close collaborator.
  - c. A comment on the quality of the oral presentation.
  - d. An opinion of the quality and completeness of the answers to questions posed by the examiners
  - e. Identify specific areas where the student may need to improve.
  - f. A decision by the Committee: **Pass/Fail/Conditional Pass (clearly define the additional work that must be completed in the case of a Conditional Pass and the deadline for completion).**