

Doctoral Comprehensive Guidelines

The Doctoral Comprehensive is a two-part examination comprised of

1. A Qualifying Paper
2. A Dissertation Proposal

If you entered the program with an MA,

- You must take the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination in your 3rd year
 - Your preparation should begin at the end of your 2nd year.

If you entered the program without an MA,

- You must take the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination in your 4th year
 - Your preparation should begin at the end of your 3rd year.

Before taking the doctoral comps, you must have

- Completed all of the course work requirements (and received final grades for all)
- Demonstrated proficiency in two languages (must be reflected on your transcript)
- Demonstrated proficiency in logic (also, must be reflected on your transcript).

Passing both parts of the exam before May 1st is required in order to maintain good standing and to be eligible to receive your final year of funding (University Fellowship) the following year.

Part I: Qualifying Paper

The qualifying paper is a paper of publishable quality on a systematic question or on an author(s).

Ideally, it should correspond to what will become an *Area of Competence* for you.

It may be a course paper that has been improved with the feedback of the instructor.

Finding a Qualifying Paper Supervisor:

You will need to secure a paper supervisor by the end of your 2nd(3rd) year. Consult with your adviser or dissertation supervisor to find a qualifying paper supervisor.

When to begin writing:

You are strongly encouraged to begin research and writing towards the end of year 2 (or 3) and over the summer, under the guidance of your qualifying paper supervisor.

When to Defend your Qualifying Paper:

The paper should be defended in the **fall semester** of year 3 (or 4).

Procedure for Defending your Qualifying Paper

Assemble your Board:

The defense is oral, with a board of **three members** composed of the paper supervisor, the supervisor of the dissertation, and another faculty member. All board members must belong to the Philosophy Department faculty. If you have a date confirmed, reserve a room.

Establish your Reading List:

The defense is based on the paper and on a **reading list of 6 to 10 authors and/or texts** from the history of philosophy (as broadly as possible) that raise significant questions or challenges for the thesis of the paper. This reading list is to be established ahead of the defense with the paper supervisor, and sent at least **two weeks before the defense**, with the paper, to the other board members. If you have not done so, contact the program administrative assistant to reserve a room.

**At least 2 weeks before the defense, fill out online the following
Qualifying Paper Defense Form:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18wz7lgIAW1JDB5RAXbSq4Z5IT4ol2ZPmZK1Y1sevOog/edit>

Defend your Qualifying paper:

Print, staple together, and bring to the defense all the Qualifying Paper Result Forms, aka ballots (see the attachment at the end of this document). Part I will be signed by your board members. Then, give all four pages to the program administrative assistant.

If the examination of the paper is failed, the paper may be resubmitted after improvement and defended again, only once, and not sooner than the following semester.

Part II: Dissertation Proposal

The formal approval of your dissertation proposal allows you to begin officially the writing of your dissertation during your university fellowship year.

You should begin thinking about the proposal by the end of your 2nd year (3rd if you did not enter the program with an MA).

You must pass the qualifying paper before you can advance to the examination of the dissertation proposal.

Finding a dissertation supervisor:

In consultation with your academic adviser, you are responsible for finding a **tenured/tenure-track faculty member of the department** who will work with you to write a dissertation proposal and direct your dissertation.

When to begin writing:

At the end of year 2 (3 if you do not have an MA) at the latest, start working with your supervisor on your dissertation proposal. For advice on what should go into a proposal see the “**Dissertation Proposal Guidelines**” in the attachments of the graduate studies handbook.

Assemble your board:

The oral examination board is composed of 3 tenured/tenure-track faculty members, including the dissertation supervisor. Except for the dissertation supervisor, they do not have to be the same persons as for the qualifying paper.

The second reader of the dissertation should normally be appointed at that time and be a member of the proposal examination board.

With approval of the Graduate Committee, one member may be a tenured/tenure-track faculty from another department within Boston College or outside.

Procedure for Defending your Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal is to be orally examined in the **spring semester** of the 3rd (or 4th) year in the program, **no later than May 1st**.

Confer with your board at the beginning of the spring semester to select a date and time for your defense and book a room with the program administrative assistant.

Fill out the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form at least two weeks before the defense:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeFaCOWgs1xr5P7aNmWblHFYZTtWScuzw0lPCPzq23IoaBXsQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Get from the administrative assistant the Doctoral Examination Result Forms (including part I already completed) and bring them to the defense (see attachment).

A failed examination may be retaken once and once only, and not sooner than the following semester.

Final Result

At the end of the examination of the dissertation proposal, the board will complete part II of the Examination Result Forms, i.e. the **Dissertation Proposal Result Form** (p. 3 of the attached document), *and the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination Report* (i.e. the synthesis of the two parts for the registrar, p. 4 of the attached document)

All the forms must then be given back to the Graduate Program Administrator.

A student attains the status of a doctoral candidate by passing the doctoral comprehensive exam. By Graduate School policy, doctoral candidates are required to register for Doctoral Continuation, Phil999901, each semester until completion of the dissertation.

ATTACHMENT

DOCTORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

RESULT FORMS, aka BALLOTS

**Four pages, to be printed, stapled,
and always circulated together**

DOCTORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULT FORMS

Student's Name:

Eagle ID Number:

The present form is composed of **one ballot for each part** of the exam, **and a synthesis** for the Registrar Office ("Examination Report").

When the **qualifying paper** has been examined, **only the ballot for the first part should be completed**, and the whole form should be given to the Graduate Program Director.

A candidate cannot proceed to the defense of the dissertation proposal if the examination of the paper is failed. The board decides when the paper can be resubmitted and defended again (only once).

When the **dissertation proposal** has been defended, **the synthesis for the registrar should be completed together with the ballot for the second part**. The synthesis should be signed by the members of the second board, but not necessarily by the members of the first board (except the board chair person—the future dissertation supervisor—, who is present in both parts.) The whole form should be given to the Graduate Program Director.

In each of the two parts, the decisions "Passed with distinction", "Passed" and "Failed" must result from a majority decision.

In the synthesis for the Registrar Office,

The decision "Passed with distinction" shall result from "Passed with distinction" in each of the two parts of the examination;

"Passed" shall result from "Passed" in one of the parts and "Passed with distinction" in the other, or from "Passed" in both;

"Failed" shall result from "Failed" in one of the parts.

If the board decides to attach any conditions or stipulations to its decision, they should be added in writing to this report.

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Part I — Qualifying Paper Result Form

Student's Name and Title of the Paper:

Date of the Examination: _____ / _____ / _____

In the view of the examination committee, the student has:

Passed the examination with distinction.

Passed the examination.

Failed the examination.

(Chair of the Examination Committee)

(Examination Committee Member)

(Examination Committee Member)

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Part II — Dissertation Proposal Result Form

Student's Name and Title of the Dissertation Proposal:

Date of the Examination: _____ / _____ / _____

The examination committee judges that the student has:

Passed the examination with distinction.

Passed the examination.

Failed the examination.

(Chair of the Examination Committee)

(Examination Committee Member)

(Examination Committee Member)



BOSTON COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR
CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02167

DOCTORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION REPORT

DATE: _____
Examinee : _____ BCID#: _____
Department: _____

The above examinee has completed the comprehensive examination. The board having considered and evaluated the totality of the examination judges that the examinee has:

Passed this examination with distinction _____
Passed this examination _____
Failed this examination _____

Therefore the examinee should/should not be promoted to the status of doctoral candidate.

Signatures: _____ (Chairperson)

N.B. To qualify, the examinee must be "passed" by a majority of the board.

The expressions "passed", "passed with distinction" indicate achievement in an ascending order of worth. The board's selection among these expressions should result from a majority decision.

If the board decides to attach any conditions or stipulations to its decision, they should be sent in writing along with this report.