

NEW DEPARTMENTAL POLICY: PHD CANDIDACY EXAM

For admission to the PhD graduate program, the student must pass the *PhD Candidacy Exam* after having made some of the first steps in research. The goal of the candidacy exam is to establish the student's research direction as soon as possible, to establish a channel for assistance from the student's Doctoral Committee, and to ascertain that the student has the necessary background to proceed. The *PhD Candidacy Exam* replaces the previous Oral Comprehensive Exam.

The *PhD Candidacy Exam* has two components:

1. A brief (~ 5 pages) written *Research Proposal*, describing the student's research progress, with a proposal for future work, submitted to the student's Doctoral Committee. The *Research Proposal* should give the relevance of the past and future work, with an appropriate bibliography. The *Research Proposal* should convey the student's current research trajectory; it could be entirely based on an initial research project, and need not describe a thesis topic. It is appropriate and expected that the *Research Proposal* will be developed collaboratively by the student and the student's advisor.
2. An oral defense of the *Research Proposal* before the student's Doctoral Committee. After a 30-minute seminar, the student will be examined by the committee. The committee will probe the student's understanding of the fundamental physics and intellectual context of the research topic. The seminar portion of the oral defense can be open to the public, under the discretion of the student's advisor.

The *PhD Candidacy Exam* should take place within two semesters of the student passing the Written Comprehensive Exam at the PhD level, at a time determined by the student's advisor. An extension can be granted by petition to the student's Doctoral Committee and the Department Head.

The student will receive admission to the PhD program based on performance on the written *Research Proposal* and oral defense, and with appropriate consideration for performance in course work. The student will be graded pass/fail. If the student fails the exam on the first attempt, the Doctoral Committee may decide that the student can take the exam again up to one year later. The outcome of the *PhD Candidacy Exam* will be communicated by the Doctoral Committee to the Department Head.