Candidacy Examination

To be admitted for candidacy for the Early Childhood Education Ph.D., students are evaluated by the area faculty through written exams followed by a scheduled oral defense of the written exams.

**Purpose**

- To evaluate the student’s understanding of content important to the field of early childhood education;
- To evaluate the student’s understanding of the processes of research related to the field of early childhood education;
- To evaluate the student’s preparedness to conduct a dissertation study.

**Candidacy Examination Committee Constituency**

The Candidacy Examination committee will consist of a chairperson and three other faculty members with the following stipulations.

- The chair or one of two co-chairs must be from the Early Childhood Program Area.
- A minimum of three members of the committee must be representative of the Early Childhood Program Area
- One member of the committee must be from either out of program area or from another department (and may be from another institution).

The Candidacy Examination Committee need not be the student’s Dissertation Committee; however, it is recommended that at least one member of the Candidacy Examination Committee be on the student's Dissertation Committee.

**Components of the Candidacy Examination**

The Candidacy Examination for the Early Childhood Education Program Area is divided into two parts. Part 1 is a written specialization exam; and Part 2 is an oral exam that examines students’ understanding of the breadth of the field of education, particularly early childhood education. The Specialization Exam is designed to assess students’ understanding of the field of early childhood education. The oral examination is designed to give the student the opportunity to expand on his/her thinking and give the faculty an opportunity to explore more fully the concepts presented with the student.

**Written Examination (Part 1)**

The Specialization Exam will be prepared by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee. Each member of the Committee will submit one question to the designated chair of the student’s committee for a total of four questions. Three of the four questions
will come from three pre-determined domains: 1) the significance of the proposed problem of study, 2) the proposed theoretical/conceptual orientation towards investigating that problem/issue and 3) the proposed methodology for investigating and understanding the problem/issue in a new or expanded way. For these three questions, we expect students to draw from theoretical, methodological and conceptual knowledge gained through previous coursework and research experiences. The fourth question will be determined by the Candidacy Examination Committee and connect to the student’s proposed inquiry or interest.

Students will have two weeks to complete the written examination. Because of the time allotted, the paper is expected to be high quality. The examination should be in APA form and free of grammatical errors. Students are prohibited from using an editor or sharing their work with anyone before the due date. The exam should be the student’s work only. Students will receive a day and time the exam is due. All exams must be submitted by email to the graduate coordinator for department of curriculum and instruction.

**Oral Defense (Part 2)**

The Oral Defense is a two-hour oral examination conducted by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee and open to any additional readers of the examination who have interest in the student’s performance. It is expected that the entire written examination serve as the basis for the oral defense.

**Scheduling the written exam and oral defense**

When a student has completed nearly all of his or her coursework (or during the semester prior to the completion of all coursework), the student is ready to schedule the Candidacy Examination. The Candidacy Examination is a month long process. Students typically set an oral defense date with their committee and then schedule the date to receive and submit the written exam after the oral defense date is secured.

The student will receive the Written Specialization Exam for Early Childhood Education question from the Graduate Coordinator. The written examination will not exceed two weeks.

The oral defense should be scheduled with the Candidacy Examination Committee for two weeks after the completed written exam. The Oral Defense will be conducted by the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee.

Scheduling of the oral defense is done with the chairperson and members of the student’s Candidacy Examination Committee. The oral defense date as well as the planned date to receive the written candidacy exam must be communicated to the Graduate Coordinator as soon as an agreed upon date is decided. All scheduling must allow for a minimum of
two weeks for the Candidacy Examination Committee to review the student’s written examination.

**Procedures**

**Step 1:** When students are ready to begin their candidacy examinations, they should choose the Candidacy Examination Committee which will supervise them through the two parts of the exam. (NOTE: Because a smooth transition from Candidacy Examination Committee to Dissertation Committee is desirable, the Graduate Adviser recommends that as students choose members for the Candidacy Examination Committee, they should bear in mind requirements for membership on the Dissertation Committee).

**Step 2:** When students have secured agreement of four faculty members to serve on the Candidacy Examination Committee, they pick up from the Graduate Coordinator in Education Building 406 the following two forms: 1) *Intent to Take C & I Doctoral Candidacy Exam*, and 2) *Program of Work*. The *Intent* form asks for a listing of the names of the Candidacy Examinations Committee members. The *Program of Work* form, which follows the guidelines of Early Childhood Education, is to be completed by typing or word processing. Both the *Intent* form and the *Program of Work* should be returned to the Graduate Coordinator before qualifying exams.

**Step 3:** The Graduate Coordinator will then send a memo appointing the Candidacy Exam Committee and issuing a call for questions to the chair of the student’s Candidacy Exam Committee, along with a copy of the student’s *Program of Work*. The Graduate Coordinator will oversee the Comprehensive Examination process.

**Evaluating the Candidacy Examinations**

The written Candidacy Examination will be read and evaluated by the Candidacy Examination Committee, who will be asked to judge the adequacy of the student’s written answers. The Candidacy Examination Committee will also conduct the oral examination. Any faculty member is welcome to attend any student’s Oral Defense.

**Review Criteria**

The faculty will make a separate evaluation of performance on the Specialization Exam. Once the student’s Oral Defense is completed, the committee will discuss the student’s performance on the Written Exam and the Oral Defense. The committee will vote whether a student passes, passes with conditions, or fails the candidacy exam.

**Decisions**

A decision to pass the student on both the Comprehensive and Specialization Exams, and the Oral Defense means the student will be allowed to advance to candidacy.
A decision to pass with conditions means the student will be allowed to advance to candidacy as soon as specified conditions are met. The imposition of these conditions is intended to help the student strengthen possible areas that are of concern to the faculty (e.g., additional research coursework, additional involvement in research projects, additional courses in content areas). The Candidacy Examination Committee chair is usually responsible for monitoring student work on the conditions set.

A decision to fail will carry the recommendation that the student be dropped from the program or that the student retake either or both parts of the Candidacy Examination. In the case of a recommendation to redo the exam, the student will be given specific suggestions on how to strengthen areas of weakness.

**Reporting Procedures**

A student is told following the Oral Defense whether he or she is being recommended for advancement to candidacy without conditions, advancement with conditions, asked to retake the examination in total or in part, or dropped from the program. One retake is permitted according to Graduate Studies Committee policy.

The Candidacy Committee Chair then reports results of deliberation to the Graduate Adviser’s office. When the student is recommended for advancement to candidacy, the Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Coordinator will then notify the student of the results and guide the preparation and submission of candidacy papers.