



PROCEDURES FOR THE PHD GENERAL EXAMINATIONS

Detailed regulations about the General Examination are contained
in the *GCTS Graduate Conjoint Degree Handbook*, Section C8.

Effective: September 1, 2023
Last updated: September 9, 2026

This document contains instructions for two types of exam formats:

- In-class Examination (see Section 1, pages 1-3)
- 24-Hour Take-Home Examination (see Section 2, pages 4-5)

It is the Supervisory Committee who determines the format for the General Examinations

SECTION 1 – IN-CLASS EXAM

GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. The Specialist Exam is a four-hour exam.
2. The Cognate Exam is a four-hour exam.
3. Order: The Specialist and Cognate exams may be taken in any order.
4. The Oral Exam is a two-hour exam and is based on material covered by the written exams and readings lists.
5. Location: The written examinations take place at the Toronto School of Theology building (47 Queen's Park Crescent East). The Oral Examination takes place at a location designated by the Supervisor.
6. September Moratorium: Written examinations cannot normally be booked to take place during the first three weeks of September.
7. Proctoring and chairing: The written exams are proctored by a GCTS staff member. Faculty examiners do not need to be present for the written examinations. However, the Oral Exam is attended by all examiners and is chaired by the Supervisor.
8. If the student is registered with UofT Accessibility Services and has recommended accommodations for these exams, please contact the GCTS Office as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.



THE EXAM STAGES

1. Questions: At the start of each written exam, questions are provided to the student on paper, and the student writes responses directly to a file on a computer supplied by TST. The computer has no network access. The Word processing software is Microsoft Word. Non-English fonts (e.g., Greek, Hebrew) are **NOT** available.
2. Answers: At the written exam's conclusion, a GCTS staff member copies the answers to a USB key. A printed copy of the answers is also given to the student at this time. The answers are then emailed to the examiners.
3. Material Covered: The material covered by the written examinations is restricted to the student's reading list (bibliography), as agreed upon by the Supervisory Committee. Any aspect of the reading list material may be examined. The Oral Examination questions are normally based on the student's written answers, but questions may extend to other matters contained in the approved reading lists. Entirely new matters unrelated to the written answers should not be introduced.
4. Interim Grades for Written Exams: The examiner(s) who set the exam (e.g. specialist or cognate) is (are) asked to grade the exam and supply the GCTS with an interim grade. Examiners normally inform the student of their interim grade. The interim grade is recorded at the GCTS and used as a guideline of the student's progress through the exam stages. If the written portions are successfully completed and judged as an overall "Pass" by the GCTS, the Oral Exam proceeds as scheduled. The minimum passing grade is a B+ on each of the exams.
5. Final Grade: Following the Oral Examination, professors are asked to confer and record a final grade on the grade form, and a Pass/Fail decision. The letter grade is recorded at the GCTS. Should a student be successful, a grade of P (Pass) will appear on their transcript. Should a student be unsuccessful, please see the GCTS Handbook (Sec. C8) for grading and contingencies. The grade and decision are recorded on the "General Examinations Final Grade Report" form (available on the TST website).

FOR EXAMINERS

1. Examination Questions: At least three business days before the date of a written exam, examiners shall submit the questions for the written portion of the exam via email to gcts.office@utoronto.ca. In advance of the exam, the student should be given a clear idea of the aspects of the subject that will be covered, the structure of the examination, the number of questions, and what aids will be permitted (if any).



2. Coordinating Questions: Where two professors are submitting questions for the same exam, they will need to confer about the exam and decide on the questions. Only the final agreed-upon questions need to be forwarded to the GCTS by the lead examiner.
3. Aids: Faculty examiners must indicate whether the student is allowed to use aids, such as dictionaries or reference materials, during the examination.

FOR STUDENTS

1. Exam start time: Students should arrive at the GCTS Office 15 minutes before the written exam start time. The GCTS will be prepared to proctor the exam at the agreed-upon times. Any changes to that time must be discussed with the GCTS Office at least one week prior to the exam as the GCTS will need to ensure room and staff availability for the exam. Subject to room availability, more than one student may be scheduled to write an exam at the same time/in the same room.
2. Materials: All exams are to be answered by the student without aids, unless aids are specifically designated by the examiners. The student may bring food and drink, clothing, etc., into the exam. However, computers, cellphones, back-packs, bags, personal items, etc. may not be permitted in the exam room – these can be securely stored in the GCTS Office during the exam.
3. Writing the Exam: The exam is written on a computer supplied by the GCTS. The student should indicate in advance of the examination date if they prefer to write the examination by hand. The GCTS cannot provide a transcription service. If transcription is required, students must make arrangements with their college of registration.

As the exams are long, it is recommended that students prepare themselves with adequate nourishment to sustain themselves during the writing period. Most students bring water or other refreshments with them into the examination room. Every effort is made to make the room temperature comfortable.

4. The Exam Room: If students would like to look at the room prior to writing the exam, they should contact the GCTS Office. It will not be possible to use the TST computer in advance of the exam.
5. The Oral Exam: Students are welcome to arrive beforehand to prepare themselves for the Oral Exam, on the date/time set by the Supervisor. For the oral exam, students may bring copies of their written exams and approved bibliography. The Oral Exam is typically two hours in length with the result communicated to the student after an *in-camera* session of the examiners.



SECTION 2 – 24-HOUR TAKE-HOME EXAM

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The Specialist Exam is a take-home exam, written in a 24-hour time period.
2. The Cognate Exam is a take-home exam, written in a 24-hour time period.
3. Order: The Specialist and Cognate exams can be taken in any order.
4. The Oral Exam is a two-hour exam and is based on material covered by the written exams and readings lists.
5. Location: The written examinations take place at the student's home/residence, or other location of their choice. The Oral Examination takes place at a location designated by the Supervisor.
6. Proctoring and chairing: The written exams are proctored by GCTS staff via email. The Oral Exam is attended by all examiners and is chaired by the Supervisor. The GCTS will communicate the interim grades for the written exams to the Supervisor.

THE EXAM STAGES

1. Questions: At the start of the written exam, questions are emailed to the student (at a valid UofT email address only).
2. Answers: At the written exam's conclusion, that is, after 24-hours, the student emails a PDF or MS Word document to the GCTS Office. The GCTS then emails the answers to all examiners.
3. Material Covered: The material covered by the written examinations is restricted to the student's reading list (bibliography), as agreed upon by the Supervisory Committee. Any aspect of the reading list material may be examined. The Oral Examination questions are normally based on the student's written answers, but questions may extend to other matters contained in the approved reading lists. Entirely new matters unrelated to the written answers should not be introduced.
4. Interim Grades for Written Exams: The examiner(s) who sets the exam (e.g. specialist or cognate) is (are) asked to grade the exam and supply the GCTS with an interim grade. Examiners normally inform the student of their interim grade. The interim grade is recorded at the GCTS and used as a guideline of the student's progress through the exam stages. If the written portions are successfully completed and judged as an overall "Pass" by the GCTS, the Oral Exam proceeds as scheduled. The minimum interim passing grade is a B+ on each of the written exams.



5. Final Grade: Following the Oral Examination, professors are asked to confer and record a final grade on the grade form, and a Pass/Fail decision. Should a student be successful, a grade of P (Pass) will appear on their transcript. Should a student be unsuccessful, please see the GCTS Handbook (Sec. C8) for grading and contingencies. The grade and decision are recorded on the “General Examinations Final Grade Report” form (available on the TST website).

FOR EXAMINERS

1. Examination Questions: At least three business days before the date of a written exam, examiners shall submit the questions for the written portion of the exam via email to gcts.office@utoronto.ca. In advance of the exam, the student should be given a clear idea of the aspects of the subject that will be covered, the structure of the examination and number of questions.
2. Coordinating Questions: Where two professors are submitting questions for the same exam, they will need to confer about the exam and decide on the questions. Only the final agreed-upon questions need to be forwarded to the GCTS by the lead examiner.
3. Aids: The 24-hour exam is “open book,” and students may utilize their notes and books. However, the student may not incorporate any previously written material into the final exam.

FOR STUDENTS

1. Exam start time: The GCTS will send the exam questions to the student at an agreed-upon time during normal GCTS Office business hours, normally 9:15 am (Eastern Time), Monday through Thursday. Any changes to the time must be discussed with the Graduate Administrator at least one week prior to the exam.
2. Materials: The 24-hour exam is “open book,” and students may utilize their notes and books. However, the student may not incorporate any previously written material into the final exam. The student may also not use the assistance of any other person in completing the exam.
3. Writing the Exam: The exam is written on a computer supplied by the student and then emailed to the GCTS Office within 24 hours of the exam start time. The final exam answers may not exceed a total of 20 pages (5000 words).
4. As the exams are long, it is recommended that students prepare themselves with adequate nourishment to sustain themselves during the writing period.



5. The Exam Location: The written examinations take place at the student's home/residence, or other location of their choice. This should be a quiet place with a comfortable workspace.
6. In the event of an emergency while taking take-home exam, such as power failure or illness, the student should contact the GCTS Office immediately by phone 416-978-2441 or email gcts.office@utoronto.ca.
7. The Oral Exam: Students are welcome to arrive beforehand to prepare themselves for the Oral Exam, on the date/time set by the Supervisor. The Oral Exam is typically a two-hour exam, with the result communicated to the student after an *in-camera* session of the examiners. The location of the Oral Exam is designated by the student's Supervisor.