

**University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Economics**  
**THESIS PROSPECTUS PAPER AND EXAM GUIDELINES**

---

**Purpose**

To test if a student has sufficient grasp of the knowledge and skills required to successfully complete the proposed program of research and defend the thesis. This is meant to be interpreted broadly, including relevant economic theory, econometric theory, techniques and software, institutional background, and related literature.

A secondary purpose is to inform department members at large about ongoing thesis research, and to allow them to help the candidate's supervisor determine if such research is likely to lead to a successful thesis. Comments and suggestions from faculty members not on the thesis committee are welcome.

**Description**

This exam is a required milestone and consists of:

- a paper
- a presentation

**Timing**

The presentation is to be done **no later than August 31 of YEAR THREE**.

The paper is due two weeks before the presentation date.

**Paper**

The paper should contain a comprehensive literature review relevant to the proposed research. The proposed research should be laid out in sufficient detail that a reader can judge the appropriateness of the approach, the novelty of the research question, and the possibility of success. At the very least, the prospectus, in the opinion of the thesis committee, should consist of a set of analyses that forms the core of a chapter in the student's thesis. It is then acceptable if the rest of the prospectus consists of research that is at an early stage. However, it is recommended that the student's thesis committee not allow the student to defend the prospectus, unless they believe that early stage ideas or concepts have a significant probability of becoming complete and acceptable thesis level research. It is the student's responsibility to convince the committee that their ideas will eventually form a complete thesis.

**Presentation**

The exam will be chaired by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, or his/her delegate. The Chair will not be a member of the thesis committee and his/her role is to moderate the discussion which should revolve around the performance of the student.

The presentation by the student will be 30 minutes long, and will lay out the body of work that will comprise the thesis. It should provide an overview of the motivation of the thesis, research questions, contributions to the literature, data requirements and methodology. The presentation should proceed uninterrupted by questions. The presentation is followed by questions from the thesis committee, usually beginning with the internal-external member, followed by others in the room.

**Decision**

At the conclusion of the exam, the thesis committee and the Chair will meet to reach a decision on whether the student has passed.

Passed	
Passed subject to completion of recommendations	This means that a candidate’s proposal and background preparation are generally adequate but certain deficiencies need to be rectified. The recommendation might require additional courses be completed, or a written report be prepared on designated aspects of the proposed research program. The specific recommendation must be clearly identified on the Examination Form, by the Chair, along with target dates and committee members responsible for ensuring the recommendations will be satisfied.
Decision deferred/re-examination required	This means that a candidate’s proposal and/or background preparation is deficient. Re-examination cannot take place within six weeks after the date of the first exam. The re-examination date must be established by the supervisor in consultation with the examiners and the candidate. A student who fails a re-examination will be required to withdraw from the PhD program.
Failed	The candidate will be required to withdraw from the PhD program.

The thesis committee must complete the PhD Thesis Prospectus Exam Decision Form. The Chair will inform the candidate of the outcome of the examination, and will notify the Economics Graduate Office of the results of the exam.