Comprehensive Exam Guidelines

Department of Geology & Geophysics

M.Sc. Students

- The M.Sc. comprehensive exam should be conducted right after the student has completed the coursework listed on the Graduate Study Plan.
- The Department requires only an oral exam, and not a written comprehensive exam.
- Determine and agree on the subject areas in which the student will be examined (listed in the GSP). The subject areas are based on students' course work and Masters research. Typically committee members distribute the responsibility of examining in different subject areas identified.
- Each committee member should provide the student with a reading list and clarify his/her expectations.
- The oral exam should start with an presentation of the Masters research work completed so far by the student. Though it is not required, this part of the exam can be / should be encouraged to be public. This is a good training for the candidate for the final defense and also facilitates constructive feedback from a small keen audience. It should be followed by a 'close door' oral exam with the committee.
- The oral examination is an opportunity for the committee to judge the students comfort level in the subject area related to a candidates research and on the research carried out for the Masters degree. It is good idea to block 2 to 4 hours in your schedule for an oral comprehensive exam.
- Complete and submit relevant paperwork (report on comprehensive exam; advancement to candidacy form). Conditional pass / fail may have consequences (greater for international students), so discuss this with Dept chair and grad school if you are unsure.