1) **Purpose**
To determine the student's potential for success in the PhD degree program and whether a student has attained the necessary knowledge, skills, and research ability to independently design a dissertation research proposal. This policy outlines the standard procedure for administering the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination, which is one the three prerequisites for attaining PhD candidacy by the end of the 3rd year of enrollment (see PhD Candidacy Policy).

2) **Examination Procedure**
- A PhD student who has completed most of the didactic coursework as outlined in the approved Plan of Study is responsible for scheduling the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination with his/her Supervisory Committee. In general, this occurs at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd year of enrollment.
- The Comprehensive Qualifying Examination consists of a NIH-style research proposal or an appropriate equivalent on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the Supervisory Faculty. The subject of the research proposal must be clearly distinct from the student's dissertation research. Initially, the student is asked to submit to the Supervisory Committee a one-page abstract outlining research hypothesis and specific aims of the student-proposed topic. The topic of the Qualifying Exam must be approved at an initial meeting of the Supervisory Committee with the student. The Supervisory Committee may ask questions and offer advice at this meeting. Upon approval of the topic, the student has four (4) weeks to complete the written proposal and submit it to committee members.
- The research proposal sections to be included are: abstract, hypothesis, specific aims, background and significance, preliminary data, research plan, and references. Margins and font size should follow the NIH format. A maximum of 12 single-spaced pages, excluding references, is allowed. The preliminary data section must be distinct from the background section and shall succinctly explain how the research plan is building upon previous studies. Consequently, data from published literature can be incorporated in lieu of preliminary data generated by the student. The bulk of the pages of the proposal should concentrate on the research plan and data analysis. It is expected that the student prepares the proposal independently.
- The subsequent oral examination of the written proposal should be scheduled within two (2) weeks of its submission. The oral examination will consist of a presentation and defense of the research proposal. The presentation should include no more than 25 slides and be no more than 30 minutes long. Committee members are entitled to ask questions on all aspects of the proposal, as well as on fundamental concepts of the student’s research area (incl. completed didactic coursework). Student must be prepared to discuss methods and procedures relevant to the sub-speciality of pharmaceutical sciences research.

3) **Assessment**
- The outcome of the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination is determined by a private vote of the Supervisory Committee. A simple majority of the Supervisory Committee must support a decision. Three outcomes are possible: 1) Pass without stipulation; 2) Pass with the stipulation that additional requirements be completed as determined by the committee; and 3) Fail.
• If the student fails the examination, the Supervisory Committee will determine the parameters for a second attempt. A second failure will result in dismissal of the student from the PhD degree program.

4) Reporting
• The PhD Qualifying Examination Report form must be used to document major conclusions of the topic selection meeting (i.e., pre-examination meeting) and the oral examination of the written proposal with the Supervisory Committee. The student is responsible for completing the top portion of this form and for bringing a hardcopy to the meeting. The Supervisory Faculty will act as the official recorder.
• The completed and signed PhD Qualifying Examination Report form must be returned within one week after the oral examination to the graduate program office for inclusion in the student’s file.
• A copy of the written grant proposal and supplemental documents (if applicable) must be submitted to the graduate program office for inclusion in the student’s file.