Purpose

An examination of the Comprehensive Paper is required in order to evaluate the student’s mastery of theory and research in a selected area of social work. It requires the student to develop a critical capacity in research and writing which is fundamental to scholarship. The Comprehensive Paper is to be a critical assessment of theory, existing knowledge and research on a selected issue, policy, or problem area in the social welfare field. The Comprehensive Paper also forms the topical and theoretical background of the research question to be addressed in the Thesis. In other words, the literature research conducted for the Comprehensive Paper advances the preliminary work necessary for formulating the Thesis question. The Comprehensive Paper asks the following questions: What do we know about the topic/issue/problem? How do we know about the topic/issue/problem? What are the relevant knowledge and theory gaps?

Students are expected to demonstrate their capacity for the integration of ideas and their skills in scholarly inquiry and writing. The goal of the Comprehensive Paper is to assess the candidate’s ability in the following areas:

- The logical development and presentation of the salient aspects and history of the topic selected.
- The selection and use of relevant literature from a variety of areas of knowledge.
- The critical analysis and synthesis of theories that are relevant to the topic.
- The critical analysis and synthesis of relevant knowledge and research studies, attending to how the studies come to their findings/conclusion, i.e. how the adopted theories and methodology interact to influence the findings and knowledge being created.

Comprehensive Paper Committee

The Comprehensive Paper Committee comprises of the student’s supervisor and a second member who may be from within or external to the School of Social Work and will likely be a member of the student’s Thesis Supervisory Committee. Both members must be appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The second member is selected on the basis of their knowledge of the student’s area of substantive and research interest. Also since the second member is often invited to be a member of the student’s Thesis Supervisory Committee, the assessment of the Comprehensive Paper provides an introduction to the background for the thesis research.
Paperwork for the Comprehensive Paper Committee – supervisor and second reader – (Appendix 1) must be submitted to the School’s Graduate Office for record.

**Timeline**

**Student has a maximum of 28 months (7 terms) to complete their Comprehensive Paper Examination.** If a student fails to pass their Comprehensive Paper Examination by the end of the 7th term, they will be required to withdraw from the Program. Students who are unable to meet the timeline will need to submit a petition to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at least two months in advance for extension for normally no more than one term (i.e. to the 8th term).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Year 1 (Term 1)</strong></td>
<td>7010 Epistemology</td>
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<td>7020 Research Methodology</td>
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<td><strong>Winter Year 1 (Term 2)</strong></td>
<td>7000 Social Justice</td>
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<td>7030 Data Analysis</td>
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<td><strong>Fall Year 2 (Term 4)</strong></td>
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<td>7040 Doctoral Seminar</td>
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<td><strong>Winter Year 2 (Term 5)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Summer Year 3 (Term 9)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Fall Year 4 (Term 10)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Summer Year 4 (Term 12)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Winter Year 5 (Term 14)</strong></td>
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Comprehensive Paper Process

1. Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan

Following the selection of a topic area, and a preliminary review of the pertinent literature, the student develops outline plan for the Comprehensive Paper. Its purpose is to require the student to develop a focus for addressing the critical analysis of relevant knowledge and research materials.

1.1. Recommended Outline Components

Study Focus: Provide a clear statement of the issue, policy or problem area which you plan to examine. Provide a brief overview of the selected topic. State your rationale for pursuing this topic of interest.

Theoretical Perspectives: Provide the main theoretical perspectives relevant to your topic that you plan to review. Provide a rationale for choosing these perspectives. Indicate what will be excluded from your critical analysis of theoretical perspectives and why.

Existing Knowledge and Research Literature: Provide the main area(s) of research studies and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers related to your chosen topic of interest.

Provide a rationale for the knowledge and research studies that will be included in your analyses. Indicate which areas of the research literature and knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers will be excluded and why.

Reference List: Provide a list of 50-75 references to be read for the Comprehensive Paper.

The Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan will be around 3 pages, excluding the references.

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1 We recognize that Indigenous students whose work is grounded within Indigenous worldviews may learn and gather knowledge from Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers from their communities as an integral part of their literature review and comprehensive exam.
1.2. Feedback on the Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan

The supervisor and the second reader will meet with the student to provide feedback on their Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan no later than April 30 in Term 5 of the students’ doctoral study. Following the meeting, the student will begin the writing of their Comprehensive Paper. The supervisor will submit paperwork for the Comprehensive Paper Examination (Appendix 1) to the School’s Graduate Office for record.

2. The Comprehensive Paper

The student has a maximum of four months to complete the Comprehensive Paper upon meeting with the Comprehensive Paper Committee. The Comprehensive paper is considered a form of examination and a piece of independent work by the student. The student is expected to work on their own in the writing of the paper. However, students may consult with their supervisor about key issues or directions that arise during the writing of the paper. The supervisor may review no more than one full draft of the paper prior to submission. The student develops the Comprehensive Paper according to the Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan. A logical ordering of the reviewed literature and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers follows the introduction of the study topic. The synthesis of both theoretical and research perspectives on the study topic is presented in a coherent, concise fashion. Types of conclusions to be reached based on the analyses may include, for example:

- integration of not-yet-connected bodies of literature and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers;
- identification of research gaps in theories, substantive knowledge and/or methodologies;
- development of the theoretical framework resulting from the critical analyses of the theoretical and research literatures, and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers;
- implications for the doctoral research direction and/or research question

The Comprehensive Paper will be around 50 pages (excluding references), typed double-spaced. The paper should be carefully edited prior to submission. The student may engage an editor for this purpose.

The title page must include the following statement:

“This Comprehensive Paper is an independent piece of work submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements to be met prior to formal approval of a doctoral proposal for a doctoral thesis in social work.”

2.1. Comprehensive Paper Assessment

The Comprehensive Paper is assessed by the student’s supervisor and second reader. Student has a maximum of four months to independently write the Comprehensive Paper upon
meeting with the supervisor and the second reader where students receive feedback on their Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan.

Upon the due date agreed upon by the student and the supervisor and the second reader, the student will submit the Comprehensive Paper to the supervisor and the second reader, who are required to independently complete a written assessment report following specific guidelines (refer to Appendix 2). The student should receive the reports and the final assessment within four weeks upon submission of the Comprehensive Paper.

The supervisor and the second reader may share their assessment reports with each other and determine if the Comprehensive Paper is deemed satisfactory (i.e. passable) prior to providing the student with their reports and communicating to the student their final assessment. If the paper is deemed satisfactory (i.e. passable), the student passes the Comprehensive Exam. If the Committee deems the paper to be unsatisfactory (i.e. unpassable requiring substantial revisions), the student is considered to have failed and is then allowed one retake of the exam. The student is allowed a maximum of three months for this re-write. If the Committee evaluates the work to be unsatisfactory a second time, the student is then considered to have failed the exam and is withdrawn from the program. If the supervisor and the second reader are discrepant in their review of the Comprehensive Paper (one satisfactory and the other unsatisfactory) upon discussion, the Graduate Program Director, in consultation with the supervisor and the student, appoints a third independent assessor. At least two satisfactory (i.e. passable) assessments are needed for the student to pass the Comprehensive Paper Exam.

Following notification that the Comprehensive Paper requirement has been satisfied, the supervisor is responsible for submitting documentation (Appendix 3 - Comprehensive Examination Report) to the Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) verifying the completion of the exam. The student submits to the GPA one coil-bound copy of the Comprehensive Paper. This copy is catalogued and is subsequently available for reference purposes, and can be signed out by the doctoral students and faculty of the School of Social Work, York University.

**Responsibilities for Students, Supervisors, and Graduate Program Director/Administrator**

The Graduate Program Director assigns the student a faculty advisor on a one-year term upon their admission to the program. The faculty advisor may or may not serve on the student’s Supervisory Committee. A responsibility of the faculty advisor is to consult with students about their Year 2 course selections, the goal being to assure that the courses taken provide adequate preparation for students’ scholarly agendas.

**Checklist for Students**
- Seek Supervisor starting Summer Year 1
- Confirm Supervisor and the second reader in Fall Year 2
- Consult with Supervisor on Comprehensive Paper Outline/Plan in Fall and Winter Year 2
• Submit Comprehensive Paper by the end of Summer Year 2

**Checklist for Supervisors**

• Appointment of Supervisor in Fall Year 2
• Confirm the student’s Comprehensive Paper second reader by the end of Fall Year 2
• Submit Comprehensive Paper supervisor and second reader (Appendix 1) documentation to the Graduate Office by the end of Fall Year 2
• Schedule meeting with the second reader and student to provide feedback the student’s Comprehensive Paper Outline Plan by April 30, Year 2
• Submit documentation (Appendix 1) on the agreed due date of Comprehensive Paper submission.
• Provide student the reports (respectively from supervisor and the second reader) and final assessment of Comprehensive Paper within four weeks of submission
• Approval of Comprehensive Paper by Dec 10, Year 3
• Submit documentation within one week upon students’ passing of the Comprehensive Paper.

**Checklist for Graduate Program Director/Administrator**

• GPD assigns faculty advisor on a one-year term to first year doctoral students upon admission.
• GPD, in consultation with the supervisor and the student, appoints a third independent assessor if there is discrepancy between the supervisor and the second reader on the passing or failing of the student’s Comprehensive Paper.

• GPA files a copy of the [Comprehensive Paper supervisor and second reader Form](#) in the student’s file
• GPA files the Assessment of Comprehensive Paper Form (Appendix 2) in the student’s file
• GPA catalogues passed Comprehensive Paper for other student and faculty’s reference
Appendix 1

School of Social Work

Comprehensive Paper Committee and Examination Timeline

Student: ____________________________________
Student ID: ____________________________________

Supervisor: ____________________________________ Date: _______________
Second Reader: ________________________________ Date: _______________

COMPREHENSIVE PAPER SUBMISSION DUE DATE: _______________________
(A max of 4 months upon meeting with student, supervisor and the second reader)

Graduate Program Director: ___________________________ Date: _______________

NOTE: A copy of this completed form is supplied to the candidate and the Program.
Appendix 2 – Assessment of Comprehensive Paper Form

Submission Due Date _______________________________________

Name of Student: ___________________________________________________________

Title of Paper: ___________________________________________________________

Name of Assessor: ___________________________________________________________

In writing the assessment of the Comprehensive Paper, the assessor is asked to comment on each of the following criteria:

1. The logical development and presentation of the salient aspects of the topic selected
2. The selection and use of relevant theoretical literature from a variety of knowledge areas and/or disciplines
3. The critical assessment of related research literature and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers
4. The analysis and synthesis of conceptual material
5. The articulation of a theoretical framework which integrates the salient issues identified through the critical analysis of the theories and research literature, and/or knowledge gathered from Knowledge Keepers
6. Quality and organization of writing

Indicate below one recommendation

1. Satisfactory and Passable

The Comprehensive Paper is judged to be passable, though it could be improved with minor revisions or modifications.

OR

2. Unsatisfactory and Unpassable

The Comprehensive Paper is judged to require substantial revisions. The student is advised to consult with the supervisor and then to revise the document for resubmission. A deadline of up to a maximum of three months, from the date of notification of the decision not to approve the paper, will be established for the purpose of resubmission.

A student who fails to receive unconditional approval of the paper after this attempt will not be permitted to proceed to a dissertation.

Date:____________________  Assessor Signature:____________________
Appendix 3
School of Social Work
Comprehensive Examination Report

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<tr>
<th>Student Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surname:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Given Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student #:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Submission:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program: Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree: PhD</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ATTEMPT: \( \square \) FIRST
\( \square \) SECOND

RESULTS: \( \square \) PASSED
\( \square \) FAILED

COMMENTS:

SIGNATURES
Supervisor: ________________________________ Date: __________
Second Reader: ______________________________ Date: __________
Graduate Program Director: __________________ Date: __________

NOTE: A copy of this completed form is supplied to the candidate and the Program.