

Qualifying Exam

The purpose of the qualifying exam is to test the overall competencies in the emphasis that the student has chosen and to evaluate whether the student has in-depth knowledge related to the dissertation work that they are or will be proposing. The faculty anticipates that a student will be the expert in the area of their dissertation topic by the completion of the dissertation, therefore the student should be well on their way by the time they take the qualifying exam. The exam aids the committee by identifying gaps, strengths and weaknesses to address as the student completes their dissertation and other degree requirements.

The qualifying exam is written by the PhD Supervisory Committee (hereafter referred to as "the Committee"). Any member of this committee, except the chair, may chair the qualifying exam. The chair of the qualifying exam is approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Each student proposes research that adds unique information, methods or other types of insights to the field. Therefore, each qualifying exam is an individualized exam and standardization is not possible.

The qualifying exam commonly, but not necessarily:

1. includes 3-5 questions that address program competencies and the doctoral student's individual research focus;
2. is answered a question at a time, usually one question over the course of one week, using any resource except other students, faculty, or other persons to answer the questions;
3. in totality, is completed over a period of several weeks;
4. is generally evaluated by the committee within 2 weeks; and
5. generally requires revisions to written responses prior to the oral examination.

Oral Exam: In all cases, after completion (including revisions) of the written exam, the student and his/her committee meets in person to clarify candidate responses and probe for further understanding of the material. After the oral examination, the student leaves the room, and the committee members discuss the student responses and assigns a grade for the combined written and oral examination.

In all cases, the Committee prepares questions prior to the beginning of the examination. In all cases, the Committee has the discretion to deviate from the examples above in order to meet the needs of any given student as approved by the chair of the qualifying exam committee.

Responses to questions requiring an essay or literature review will follow the page limits imposed by the Committee and the following formatting guidelines: ½ inch margins, 11-point Arial font, and single-spacing. Page limits exclude references unless otherwise directed by the Committee. Page limits for each question are set and enforced by the qualifying exam committee.

After the completion of the last question, the Committee has two weeks to review the

doctoral student responses. The primary author of an exam question assumes primary responsibility for the evaluation of his/her question.

The grades for each question are determined by majority vote; the committee chair's vote breaks all ties. The student is then advised of the grade.

The qualifying exam questions are graded as follows: Pass, Revise and resubmit, or Fail.

- **Pass:** is awarded when the response is complete, demonstrates a thorough understanding of the concepts tested and the literature associated. Minor issues in writing or in interpretation of literature may exist.
 - Satisfactory response in writing and/or via verbal responses to the committee.
 - Students must pass each question in order to pass the exam.
- **Revise and resubmit:** requires revision of the written response.
 - **Revise and resubmit** is awarded when the response is not complete, the interpretation of the literature is partially flawed, or the response does not communicate an adequate understanding of the concepts being tested.
 - If the student receives a revise and resubmit, the student will have time to prepare a revision for each question they are required to revise. The committee will indicate the time for revision.
 - The committee is expected to provide clear, written guidance to the student regarding the components of the response that are not satisfactory.
 - A grade of revise and resubmit does not guarantee that the final grade is a pass of the exam.
 - At the end of the revision timeline, the Committee reviews the revised answers and then the grade for each question becomes Pass or Fail.
- **Fail:** The grade of **Fail** is applied when the response does not answer the question, demonstrates poor understanding or inability to communicate understanding of the concepts.
 - Students must pass all questions to pass the exam
 - The student may take a qualifying exam a maximum of 2 times.
 - Use of incorrect citations or plagiarism in any one question or more result will result in a failed exam.
 - If the student receives a Revise and resubmit, the student will have time to prepare a revision for each question they are required to revise. The committee will indicate the time for revision.
 - The committee will provide clear, written guidance to the student regarding the components of the response that are not satisfactory.
 - A student who the exam will be given a new exam after a minimum period of 3 months.