

Guidelines for Ph.D. Qualifying Exams

Graduate School Requirements for Qualifying Exams: The qualifying exam is required of all Ph.D. candidates. The student must be registered in the term in which the qualifying exam is given. The examination, prepared and evaluated by the full supervisory committee, is both written and oral and covers the major and minor subjects. The chair and external member of the supervisory committee must be physically present with the student at the oral portion. If a student fails the qualifying exam, the Graduate Coordinator must be notified. No more than one reexamination may be requested, but it must be recommended by the supervisory committee and approved by the Graduate Coordinator. At least one semester of additional preparation is required before re-examination. A minimum of two semesters must elapse between the oral portion of the qualifying exam and graduation. The semester in which the qualifying exam is passed is counted, provided that the exam occurs before the midpoint of the term.

Admission to Candidacy: A doctoral student becomes a candidate for the Ph.D. degree when the student is granted formal admission to candidacy. Such admission requires the approval of the student's supervisory committee, the department chair, the college dean, and the dean of the Graduate School. The approval must be based on:

1. The academic record of the student (all grades B- or higher with a minimum 3.0 GPA)
2. Passing a qualifying examination
3. A supervisory committee approved dissertation topic
4. The supervisory committee's opinion on overall readiness of the candidacy

The student should apply for admission to candidacy as soon as the oral examination is passed and a dissertation topic is approved by the student's supervisory committee. An "Admission to Candidacy" form (located on the HHP website) should be signed by all committee members after passing the oral examination. A student may not register for HLP 7980 (Research for Dissertation) until he or she is admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree.

Options for Written Exam

Written Component: The exam is to take place over a four/five day period, allowing for four hours of writing each day for a structured format. The content areas are to include:

1. Core
 2. Statistic and Research Methods
 3. Outside Concentration
 4. Dissertation topic
- Exam Formats:
 - Proctored exam in SPM exam room (FLG320)
 - Closed Book - no internet access or notes allowed in testing room
 - Open Book
 - Take-home exam (location must be approved by the committee chair)
 - Combination of proctored and take-home exam

Oral Component: The oral exam must be scheduled within two weeks of successfully completing the written portion of the exam. Except for allowed substitutions, all members of the supervisory committee must be present with the student at the oral part. At this time, the supervisory committee is responsible for deciding whether the student is qualified to continue to work toward a Ph.D. degree. It is important that students allow plenty of time to schedule the oral exam and it is recommended that this be done in conjunction with the scheduling of the written exam. The length and content of the exam is determined entirely by the supervisory committee. At this time, the supervisory committee is responsible for deciding whether the student is qualified to continue to work toward a Ph.D. degree.

The purpose of the oral component is:

1. To allow the student the chance to clarify any weak components of the written exam or to answer any components of the exam that were not previously addressed;
2. To evaluate the ability of the student to think on his or her feet and carry on an intelligent scientific dialogue with other scientists; and
3. To evaluate whether the student has sufficient breadth of knowledge in their core and chosen specialization areas.

Preparing for Qualifying Exams:

- It is important that students allow plenty of time to schedule the oral exam and it is recommended that this be done in conjunction with the scheduling of the written exam.
- The doctoral committee chair should indicate whether or not each written qualifying exam question is “open book” or “closed book.”
- The doctoral committee chair will solicit input from each committee member and make sure the questions adequately assess the student’s competence.
- If the doctoral committee is unanimous that extenuating circumstances warrant it, the student may have additional accommodations to complete the exam, with the approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

Instructions for Scheduling Qualifying Exams:

- Students should meet with their committee chair at least 1 semester prior to taking their exam to begin planning.
 - Exams should be scheduled prior to the midpoint of the term in order to receive credit for candidacy in the current semester. If exams are passed after the midpoint of a term, the student’s candidacy will not be active until the following semester. Two consecutive semesters of candidacy are required to for graduation.
- Once the student and committee chair determine that a student is ready for the exam, the student should discuss potential dates with their advisor.
- Students should contact the Graduate Program Assistant to verify that a testing location and proctor is available for their requested exam schedule at least 4 weeks in advance. If no location or proctor is available, an alternate date or exam format should be chosen.
 - Proctored exams are typically scheduled in FLG320.
- Once testing location and format have been confirmed with the Graduate Program Assistant, students and their advisor should complete and sign the Qualifying Exam Format Agreement and return to the Graduate Program Assistant for filing.
- Advisors should email the exam content to the Graduate Program Assistant at least 1 week prior to the test date.