Qualifying Exam

See Chapter IV, heading Doctor of Philosophy, subheading Qualifying exam

See Chapter IV, heading Doctor of Philosophy, subheading Program Regulations

Once the examination/defense has been setup by the Graduate Program Assistant, the Chair is responsible for following each program's specific process for the complete examination experience (e.g. questioning process from public attendees and examining committee, avoidance of asking own questions, following the time requirements, etc.). This process needs to be followed as precisely as possible to ensure fairness across all students within the program.

However, it is possible for the student and/or advisor to request a modification or accommodation to the process. All requests must be made to the Examination/Defense Chair who is responsible for ensuring that the process is fair to all students. Accommodations are possible as long as these are managed by the Defense/Examination Chair. If you have a defense/examination coming up and would like to discuss an issue related to the process, please discuss this with your Defense/Examination Chair with as much advance notice as possible to allow this person to discuss with relevant others if necessary (e.g. Department Chair, Grad Studies) and/or to arrange the modifications.

Look for "Area-specific qualifying exam" below CONTENTS for area-specific guidance if it exists.

File attachments: Approval of Qualifying Examination Paper Proposal.doc

Area-specific Qualifying Exam PHD AS

Additional regulations specific to the Applied Social Psychology PhD program:

The Applied Social PhD Qualifying Examination will take place no later than the 5th semester. Its three broad goals are to demonstrate the student's knowledge of the subject matter of Applied Social Psychology, ability to integrate material derived from his/her studies, and ability and promise in research.

Qualifying Examination Committee
Graduate Studies Requirements

The Examination Committee, appointed by the chair or director of the academic unit concerned, consists of five members:

The Chair/Director of the academic unit (or designate) or the Graduate Coordinator, who acts as chair of the Examination Committee (see Note 1)
Two members of the graduate faculty who are not members of the Advisory Committee (see Note 2)
Two members of the Advisory Committee
Normally, at least one of these members must be from outside the department in which the student is registered (see Note 3)

NOTE 1: The Chair is responsible for all arrangements (setting of meetings, initiation of communication with/between committee members and the student, decisions about format of communication, etc.). The Chair may not be a member of the Advisory Committee.

NOTE 2: For students in Applied Social Psychology, one member should be primarily from the AS area; it is strongly recommended that the other member should not be from the AS area.

NOTE 3: The outside member may be a member of the Advisory Committee.

Typical Committee for an Applied Social Student

Chair of Department, Graduate Coordinator, or designate
Advisor
Outside member of Advisory Committee
Applied Social area member not on Advisory Committee
Non-Applied Social area member not on Advisory Committee
It should be noted that the Qualifying Examination is an examination by the department, not by the Advisory Committee or the AS area. Therefore, the composition of the Qualifying Examination Committee should not be based on the proposed dissertation topic or the topic of the Qualifying Examination paper.

Qualifying Examination Components
The Qualifying Examination in Applied Social Psychology consists of two components.

1. The Qualifying Examination Paper (QP):

1.1 Process of Development

As early as possible following the constitution of the student's Advisory Committee, the student will confer with her/his Advisor about the Qualifying Examination Committee's composition and the proposed QP topic, and will then submit the Qualifying Examination Committee Appointment form to the Chair of the Department. Following approval of the composition of the Qualifying Examination Committee, the student will meet individually with the members of the Committee to finalize the topic of the paper and discuss relevant literatures.

The student then submits a proposal for the Qualifying Paper's content and structure (2-5 pages plus list of references) to the Qualifying Examination Committee, and meets with the Committee to receive comments and suggestions. The outline should clearly specify the topic and the scope of the paper and identify the literature(s) that will be reviewed (brief description(s), some examples of references) (see 3. under Criteria for Evaluation). It may also include a brief preliminary statement about possible critiques and issues (see 1. and 2. under Criteria for Evaluation). Students can have as many meetings as they want with each committee member before writing their proposal, in order to get verbal or written feedback about conceptual issues or the scope of the paper (e.g., sections that are or are not needed, literatures to include). After reading the proposal, each committee member will give oral or written feedback about conceptual issues, the scope of the proposed paper, and/or their expectations, but not editorial comments on the writing itself. When the student is satisfied that their proposal is ready for approval, they should notify the Chair of the Committee, who will call a proposal approval meeting. The Committee will then meet with the student to discuss and approve the proposal. Please note that approval of the proposal is not a guaranteed outcome of this meeting, but depends on the extent to which the Committee is satisfied that the proposed paper will meet the QP requirements. Additionally, to ensure that the student and all Committee members agree on the expectations for the QP, more than one proposal draft or meeting may be required before the proposal is approved; students should keep this possibility in mind when planning their timelines. Once the Committee approves the proposal, the members sign the approval form and the student may commence work on the QP. It is recommended that a tentative date for submission of the paper (to be within 3 months of the proposal’s approval) and

the oral examination (to be within 2 weeks of the paper's submission) be set when the committee approves the proposal. The paper must be submitted within three months of approval, but the tentative deadline can be moved as long as it continues to meet the 3 months timeline.

1.2 Focus and Goals

The QP can focus on a topic that is unrelated to the dissertation or it can focus on the broader literature related to the proposed dissertation topic. It cannot be a review of the literature that relates most closely to the proposed dissertation topic. In other words, the QP cannot be transferred directly into the dissertation's literature review.

The student will submit a paper that demonstrates the ability to integrate theory, research, and/or practice within the field of applied social psychology. The paper may address theoretical, metatheoretical, methodological, epistemological, historical and professional issues as appropriate. It should include a review and critical analysis of the literature and directions for future research in the area. The paper should be deemed worthy of consideration for publication in a reputable journal.

1.3 Criteria for Evaluation (Expectations)

i. Conceptual & Integrative Skills: Demonstrates a thorough grasp of the subject matter and insightfully integrates theory, research, and/or practice. Generates novel but solidly grounded ideas and concepts which are extrapolated from and extend the established literature.
ii. Critical Analysis: Presents concise and original critical analysis based on sound logical and/or empirical foundations. Identifies technical, conceptual, and procedural flaws and recommends appropriate remedies.
iii. Coverage of Research Literature: Summarizes and references a wide and representative cross-section of the relevant literature and presents this literature concisely.

Each of the three criteria must be addressed acceptably.

Minimum expected length is 30 pages and maximum length is 40 pages of text (i.e., excluding references).

NOTE: Members of the Examination Committee may advise the student towards completion of the written paper. However, members of the Committee will not comment on or review drafts of the written paper itself. One of the goals of this qualifying examination component is that the student write a major paper without substantive feedback from any member of the Examination Committee.

1.4 Submission

Submission will be by electronic or hard copy, depending on the preferences of the committee members.

The QP must be submitted no later than 3 months from the date the Qualifying Examination Committee approved the proposal. (Submission will be by electronic or hard copy depending on the preferences of the Committee members.) Failure to submit the QP by this deadline will result in a grade of "Fail." Deviation of the QP from the proposal, if not approved by the Qualifying Examination Committee, may also result in a grade of "Fail."

The oral examination must be scheduled no later than two weeks after the QP is submitted to the Qualifying Examination Committee.

The Qualifying Examination Committee will make a decision regarding the acceptability of the QP within 1 week of its submission.

1.5 Evaluation

Members of the Qualifying Examination Committee will submit their written comments and grades to the Chair of the Committee. If all members (or all but one) submit a grade of "Pass," the Chair will convey this decision to the student and committee members together with a synthesis of the comments. The Committee will not meet, the paper will be deemed "accepted," and the Chair will schedule the Oral Examination.

If there is more than one Abstention or vote of Fail, a grade of “Fail” will be assigned to the QP. The Chair will convey this to the Committee and to the student. The Chair will convene a meeting of the Committee with the student to discuss plans for submission of a new QP. The new deadline will be negotiated with the student and will take into account the extent of the required revisions, but must be set within 3 months of this meeting. The new oral examination will be scheduled 2 weeks after the revised paper is due.

1.6 Oral Examination

The oral examination will take place within two weeks of the student’s submission of the QP. The oral exam will be held in camera, with only the student and committee members attending. The student will not be required to present an oral summary of the paper to the Committee. Instead, the Chair will call on each Committee member to pose questions to the student, in successive rounds or until no questions remain, but no later than 2 hours after the start of the oral. Once completed, the student will absent themselves from the examination, and the Committee will communicate their assessments to the Chair. The quality of the student's answers forms the basis for the Committee members' evaluation of the oral. The oral exam is judged a pass or fail by a majority vote. Abstentions count as "Fail."

In cases where the written QE was passed, but the student failed the oral exam, ‘revisions’ (preparation for another oral exam) should usually be expected to be completed within a matter of weeks. In exceptional circumstances students can be given up to a maximum of 3 months to prepare for another oral exam.

NOTE: A grade of "Pass" on the Qualifying Examination Paper requires a grade of "Pass" on both the Paper and the Oral Examination. A second failure on either the paper or the oral examination results in a recommendation to withdraw from the program.

2. The Research Component:

It is expected that all students will avail themselves of opportunities to conduct research and knowledge mobilization activities during their graduate studies, and demonstrate their development as independent researchers as part of the Qualifying Examination. These opportunities will arise from the research seminars they take for course credit as well as from other research experiences, for example, involvement in a Research Centre such as the Live Work Well Research Centre or The Research Shop. Students should seek preliminary feedback from their Advisors as to their research development and readiness to initiate the QE process. Advisors should review a draft Research Dossier (see below) and/or research CV to facilitate this discussion.

2.1 Research Dossier Submission

In consultation with the Advisor, the student will submit a Research dossier to the Examination Committee that includes the following:

1. A letter from the student describing and contextualizing the research that they have done, the competencies that they have achieved, and their development as a researcher.

2. A list of research contributions, including articles, chapters, manuscripts, reports, and other documents that testify to the quantity and quality of the student's research accomplishments. In the case of research projects that have involved collaborators, the student will identify their unique contribution to the planning, design, implementation, analysis, and reporting of the research.

3. An appendix, which includes up to three of the aforementioned contributions, selected by the student, which best showcase their research progress and direction.

Students' dossiers will likely reflect their choice of streams in the program. Students in the scientist-practitioner stream will also submit letters from practicum supervisors that comment on the research completed under their supervision. Students may also include letters from other individuals (e.g., research supervisors, co-authors) commenting on their research contributions if they so wish.

Note that all students are expected to submit this dossier and all students must include evidence of research that is in addition to their MA thesis. The nature and extent of such evidence will vary; it should be sufficient to demonstrate that the student is capable of carrying out research beyond the MA level.

The Research Dossier will be submitted with the QP if not before.

The Research component also requires the completion of the form "PhD Advisory Committee Qualifying Examination Research Evaluation" by the student's Advisor indicating that the student is capable of carrying out research at the Ph.D. level.

2.2. Evaluation

At the completion of the Oral Exam, the Chair will ask Committee members to provide their assessments of the contents of the Research Dossier. These assessments will be summarized by the student’s Advisor, who will be tasked with communicating the Committee’s feedback to the student. The Committee’s feedback will focus on the extent to which the student’s Research Dossier shows evidence of an independent and promising research trajectory. The Committee’s evaluation of the Research Dossier is offered for formative purposes only, and is not a basis for passing/failing the Qualifying Examination. It is expected that the student and the Advisor will have attended to this component from the time of the student's entry into the program and that all students will present a dossier that meets the requirements for independent research at the PhD level.

2.3 Overall Evaluation

The Examination Committee will make a decision about the overall grade (Pass/Fail) for the Qualifying Examination as a whole immediately following the Oral Examination. Evaluation of the Research Dossier is offered for formative purposes only.

2.4 Overview: Qualifying Examination Steps and Dates

NOTE: the time line given here is based on the expectation that the Qualifying Examination will normally be completed by the end of the 4th semester. It is designed to ensure that students will have no difficulty meeting the Graduate School deadline for completion (end of the 5th semester). [Dates in brackets refer to semesters for students entering the Program in September.]

Form Committee; following approval by Dept. Chair of Committee composition and submission of Committee Appointment form to grad secretary, meet individually with Committee members to finalize topic of Qualifying Examination Paper and discuss relevant literatures; inform AS area members.

When: by end of second semester. [Winter, Year I]

Submit proposal for paper to Committee, meet with Committee, obtain approval of proposal; submit approval form and copy of proposal to grad secretary.
When: End of second month, third semester [Spring, Year I]

Submit QP to Committee.
When: within 3 months of approval of outline of paper by Committee (end of first month, 4th semester) [Fall, Year II]

Submit research dossier; Advisor to submit Research Evaluation form
When: With paper if not before.

Committee decision re acceptability of paper.
When: within 1 week of QP submission.

Oral examination.
When: (normally) within two weeks of QP submission. (end of 3rd month, 4thsemester) [Fall/Winter Year II]

Decision about overall grade for Qualifying Examination.
When: immediately following Oral Exam (end of 4th semester, Fall, Year II) (end of 5th semester at the latest) [Winter, Year II]

Area-specific Qualifying Exam: Research Dossier

The research dossier showcases the doctoral student's accomplishments and skills in the research and professional practice domains. By way of summary and reflection, students write a statement that communicates the focus and goals of their research, areas of interest with respect to content and methods, and dissemination activities. Contract, consulting, and practicum work should also be included in the statement, with commentary about their significance for personal and community development.

In this dossier students are expected to reflect on the ways their past coursework, research activities, and community practice experiences have shaped them as scholars and practitioners, and prepared them for their career plans. Ideally, the statement will attest to formative influences that go beyond the formal requirements they met for their undergraduate and graduate degrees, and it will also express an emergent identity as an applied social doctoral candidate.

Since it is recognized that students in the Applied Social graduate program will differ in the emphasis they place on academic and applied research, it is incumbent on the student to write a statement that informs the Qualifying Committee of their interests and goals, and supports it with relevant documents and letters from mentors, clients, collaborators, and/or field supervisors

Basic research skills & knowledge

The dossier will have a section that testifies to the student's acquisition and mastery of basic research skills. It will inform the Qualifying Examination committee's understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and social psychological questions addressed by the research. It may also include information about future research directions to be pursued in a postdoctoral or employment setting.

Application skills & knowledge

The dossier will also have a section that testifies to the student's acquisition and mastery of professional or scientist-practitioner knowledge and skills. Practicum deliverables and non-proprietary products of contracts and consulting activities can be featured, along with explanations of their relevance to applied social psychology and to the understanding and amelioration of social problems and the promotion of social justice. The term application is broadly defined as any activity in which skills and knowledge associated with the process of research are used to address a specific problem, issue or concern.

In sum application covers any direct or indirect exchange between research producers (e.g. university researchers) and research users (including professionals or others whose work can benefit from research findings).

Content

The research dossier includes the following elements:

1. A statement, which summarizes past basic research and applied experiences, including skills and knowledge gained, and outlines goals and expectations for the remainder of the student's PhD and beyond. The strongly recommended length is 2 pages single-spaced. The statement can be a maximum of 3 pages single-spaced.

Note that if you have much past basic research and/or applied experiences and/or goals and expectations you will have to select which ones to focus on in this statement and may have to leave some out. In such cases, you are encouraged to select those experiences, which most reflect your vision of yourself as a researcher.

2. A letter from your primary PhD advisor, which must be submitted directly to the committee.
3. One or more letter(s) from someone who can attest to past/current experience in an applied setting (e.g., from a past practicum supervisor), which must be submitted directly to the committee.
4. Evidence of research experiences, submitted as an appendix, such as

- Certificates from seminars or workshops attended on special topics tied to basic research skills (e.g., Summer camp organized by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology)
- Testimonials of research experiences (e.g., additional letters from a different person than the one listed in point 2 above who can attest to your past/current experiences)
- Outlines of posters presented at professional conferences (if they are submitted you may provide the abstract instead of the outline) about basic research
- Papers presented or submitted at professional conference about basic research
- Manuscripts under review about basic research
- Publications about basic research
- Please do not include work in progress manuscripts or plan of study for dissertation

5. Evidence of application experiences, submitted as an appendix, such as

- Reports or manuals produced during a practicum
- Journal logs that outline applied experiences that the students have maintained (e.g., highlighting how a student has negotiated some of the challenges in conducting group based interventions)
- Certificates from seminars or workshops attended on special topics tied to applied research skills
- Testimonials of applied experience (e.g., additional letters from a different person than point 3

above that can attest to your past/current experience in an applied setting, such as from a practicum supervisor)
- Papers presented in an applied context (i.e., presentation given that focused on application as previously described)
- Outlines of posters presented at professional conferences that focused on applied research (if they are submitted you may provide the abstract instead of the outline)
- Papers presented or submitted at professional conference that focused on applied research
- Presentation at the Applied Social Area Speaker series that focused on applied research
- Manuscripts about applied research that are under review
- Publications about applied research

6. Evidence of research dissemination, submitted as an appendix, such as

- Outlines of posters presented at professional conferences (if they are only submitted you may provide the abstract instead of the outline)
- Papers presented or submitted at professional conference
- Papers presented at the Applied Social Area Speaker series
- Manuscripts under review in peer-reviewed journals
- Peer-review publications

Note: Do NOT submit your MA thesis or your honours thesis. These have been completed for the fulfillment of requirements of a previous degree and cannot be “re-used” here. Publications, papers and/or posters derived from your MA thesis or honours thesis are acceptable.

7. If the student wishes to submit other documents in an appendix s/he should discuss this with the committee.

Distinguishing basic research and application

Although research often has either a basic or an applied orientation, in many cases the distinction between the two types is not completely clear-cut. Thus, although for organizational purposes the research and applied aspects are described separately above, the student and the committee will recognize the potential overlap between these aspects when reviewing the dossier. Some elements of the dossier may be relevant to both the basic research and the applied experiences of students.

Curriculum vitae

The research dossier must also contain the most recent version of the CV of the student submitted in appendix.

Submission of Research Dossier

Students must submit their research dossier along with their qualifying paper at the latest. Students are encouraged to submit their research dossier in electronic format.

Evaluation of Research Dossier

The dossier is to be considered by the Qualifying Exam committee in their assessment of the exam. It does not, however, constitute a stand-alone element of the examination. Students cannot pass or fail the examination based on the dossier.

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