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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