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.

Area-specific qualifying exam PHD IO

PhD Qualifying Exam

The qualifying examination is an examination by the I-O Area. Upon completing it satisfactorily, the student is deemed to have met both departmental, and area, standards and becomes a candidate for the PhD degree.

Qualifying Exam Information

Overview

Students are to write (written component) and defend an original scholarship that makes a theoretical contribution to the field. The goal is to develop a novel, insightful conceptual article that would be suitable for submission to an outlet such as Academy of Management Review. The paper needs to focus on a topic that is unrelated to the dissertation.

The paper (and oral presentation) needs to advance theory or the theory development process in the area of Industrial/Organizational psychology. This can be done by…

- developing new theory,
- significantly challenging current theory,
- synthesizing recent advances and ideas into fresh theory, or

• initiating a search for new theory by pointing out and carefully delineating a novel type of problem.

Evaluation

Papers will be evaluated based on substantive content, writing style, and structure.
On the defense day, students will be evaluated based on their ability to effectively defend his/her scholarly ideas. The research evaluation form (appendix A) will also be considered.

Formatting

The paper can be written according to APA style guidelines or the Academy of Management style guidelines. However, the student must use one style and it must be consistent throughout.
The paper should be between 20-30 double spaced pages of text using 1 inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font. Abstract, appendences, references, tables, and figures do not count towards the length guidelines.

Formation of the QE Committee

The examining 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 chair of the graduate studies committee, who acts as chair of the examination committee except when this person is also chair of the advisory committee. In that event, the chair will designate another member of the regular graduate faculty of the unit to chair the examination;
• Two members, normally of the regular or associated graduate faculty who are not members of the advisory committee, in addition to the chair;
• Two members of the advisory committee
• One member of the examination committee must be from outside of the psychology department.

Note: The QE Committee is officially approved by Graduate Studies when the Oral Examination is scheduled (i.e., after your QE paper is written). Take this into account when considering committee members external to the university.

QE Timeline

In the second term in the PhD program, students submit a proposal (two pages, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times-New Roman font) to their examination committee by the first day of the second month.This means the due date is typically February 1 for students starting the PhD in September.

Members of the QE Committee will read the proposal to reflect on the scope and feasibility of the topic. Next, the QE Committee will meet to generate one feedback document for the student that integrates the various viewpoints of the committee. The committee will resolve any differences in perspectives to ensure the feedback provides clear and consistent direction for the student. The advisor takes notes during this meeting, which will form the basis for the first draft of the feedback document. The committee then jointly edits this document until all parties are satisfied with the feedback document.

The feedback document is sent to the student by the Chair of the QE Committee.

The approval process for the QE proposal may require multiple rounds. In practice, the QE proposal is typically approved after the student submits a second modified proposal based on the feedback from the first proposal.

No later than the third term of their PhD (typically the summer term) students should contact the QE Chair to schedule the submission and examination dates. This contact should occur no later than the end of the first month of the third term (i.e., typically the end of May). To assist with the scheduling, the student should provide the QE Chair with a detailed two-week window of availability for examination. These dates should be submitted to the QE Chair at least 4 weeks prior to the first potential examination date (to allow for scheduling time and the paper being submitted two weeks before the exam).

Students may have in-person or audio/video conversations with their committee members about the paper prior to a submission. Documents related to the QE may not be shown or sent to committee members. Examples of materials that may not be shown or sent include outlines, drafts, slides, etc. Email correspondence with committee members, other than for scheduling, is prohibited.

Students may contact the Library Writing Resource Center for writing assistance with the QE paper.

The QE paper must be submitted to the QE committee, via email, 2 weeks (to the hour) prior to the QE examination date.

QE Research Evaluation Statement

At, or prior to, the Oral examination, the examining committee must be presented with a written evaluation of the quality of the student's research performance to date and of the student's potential as a researcher. As a qualifying examination, consideration is to be given not only (1) to the student's knowledge of the subject matter and ability to integrate the material derived from his or her studies, but also (2) to the student's ability and promise in research. The examining committee will determine the relative importance to be given to these two major components of the qualifying examination. The Research Evaluation Statement Form is included in Appendix A.

QE Procedure for the Oral Examination

The oral examination will proceed as follows.

The exam will take place in-camera. The student will not make a presentation of his/her paper. The oral examination will be an examination of the document turned into the committee.
It is the examination Chair’s responsibility to ensure that the procedures below are followed.
The examination is attended by only the examination committee and will consist of several rounds of questioning.

a) Questioning of the student by the Examination will typically proceed as follows:
Typically, there are two rounds of questions from committee members. Each committee member is allotted 15 minutes during each round.

If needed, a third round of questions is possible.

b) Following the questions, the student is asked to leave the room and the committee debates the quality of the document and exam performance. The candidate is deemed to have passed if not more than one of the five voting Examination Committee members votes negatively (unsatisfactory). An abstention is regarded as a negative vote.

c) The committee is to evaluate the paper and the responses to questions together.

d) If the Examination Committee determines that the written document and oral exam are

unsatisfactory, the candidate may be given the opportunity for a second attempt. A second unsatisfactory report constitutes a recommendation to the Board of Graduate Studies that the student be asked to withdraw.

Criteria for Grading QE Paper and Examination

An individual committee member will consider the paper and the oral exam together as “unsatisfactory” if he or she gives 2 or lower on two or more of the dimensions below.

Scores on the dimension below will not be tallied across committee members.

1. Utilization of Research Literature

5. Summarizes and references a representative cross-section of the relevant literature and presents this literature. Points out the most relevant and important material for the question at hand when summarizing individual theories or research. Selected only the literature that is highly relevant for the proposed model/theory.

4. Adequately summarizes and references the major literature relevant to the response. Shows clearly how this literature supports, or refutes, important points being made in the paper.

3. Summarizes and references the literature, but misses some work that would make the argument more complete and effective or draws on literature that is not relevant for answering the question. Is somewhat inconsistent in use of the research literature, selectively picking and choosing from sources rather than systematically reflecting the relevant gist of the theorist’s ideas or researcher’s findings.

2. Fails to include major works that professional consensus would identify as foundational to the area of research or theory under discussion. Use of remaining sources is partial and incomplete, although the concepts and research in this work is used appropriately. Fails to consider the literature that presents alternate points of view.

1. Fails to cite a considerable portion of the relevant and important theory or research results that directly bear on the question.

2. Grasp of Subject Matter

5. Demonstrates a superior and accurate (the authors/ theorists would be in full agreement with their ideas or findings being summarized in this way) grasp of the subject matter. Accurately answers the complexities of the question.

4. Demonstrates very good grasp of subject matter. Response shows good depth of understanding.

3. Generally demonstrates a good understanding of the subject matter. However, at times, uses concepts in a way that is liable to cause objections from an informed reader on the grounds that the ideas have not been adequately represented or are represented in a superficial manner.

2. Demonstrates a limited and not entirely accurate grasp of subject matter such that the overall quality of the response is noticeably reduced. At times, misrepresent ideas from the theoretical or research literature.

1. Demonstrates very little understanding of subject matter. Discusses the research literature in ways that the author/ theorist or professional colleagues would reasonably object to as unfounded and/or misleading. Misunderstands and/or misrepresents important concepts, theories, research findings, and/or practical implications.

3. Integrative Skills

5. Insightfully integrates the different issues that are relevant to the subject matter. Insightfully integrates theory, research, and practice. Generates novel, but solidly grounded, ideas and concepts that are extrapolated from, and extend, the established literature and practice and integrates them into a coherent (i.e., mutually supportive) framework.

4. Adequately integrates the different issues that are relevant to the subject matter. Adequately integrates theory, research, and practice. Concepts, theories, research findings, and practical implications are carefully explained and related to each other in a proficient manner within the issues and perspectives already established in the literature.

3. Has some difficulty integrating concepts into a coherent and targeted argument that is convincing to the reader. Has some difficulty integrating the different issues that are relevant to the subject matter for theory, research, and practice.

2. Integration of concepts, theories, findings, and practical implications is partial and incomplete. Has considerable difficulty integrating the different issues that are relevant to the subject matter (e.g., theory, research, and practice) into a coherent framework.

1. Is unable to integrate material into a coherent framework. Is unable to integrate the different issues that are relevant to the subject matter. Cannot integrate theory, research, and practice.

4. Critical Analysis

5. Presents concise and original critical analyses that are based on sound logical and/or empirical foundations. Insightfully points out technical, conceptual, procedural, and other fatal flaws (i.e., that have a demonstrable impact on the literature) and recommends appropriate remedies. Consistently flags critical analysis and speculation, clearly distinguishing these from established research findings and weighs them appropriately in the line of argument.

4. Presents clear and careful critical analysis based on sound logical and/or empirical foundations. Points out and critiques problems/limitations in existing literature/practice. For the most part, flags critical analysis and speculation, clearly distinguishing these from established research findings and weights them appropriately in the line of argument.

3. Presents critical analysis that, although it does not misrepresent existing theory and/or research, shows somewhat incomplete understanding of the ideas. Introduces critical analysis, but does so inconsistently, leaving some areas underemphasized and others overemphasized. Critical analysis presented is not original or novel.

2. Presents critical analysis addressing major themes or issues that are raised in the response but misrepresents existing theory and research to some extent, more on minor matters than major ones. Introduces critical commentary on a piecemeal or sporadic basis without proper rationale for introducing it.

1. Critical commentary, at least some of it misrepresenting pivotal theory or research, is scattered throughout the response with no apparent rationale for it being there.

5. Organization, Clarity, and Format

5. Response is structured with superior organization. All aspects of the question are explored in a highly systematic and disciplined manner. Ideas are presented in a clear manner. Appropriate elements of style are consistently used throughout (e.g., Transition sentences between paragraphs, appropriate

headings, organization of response into basic sections such as introduction - main body - conclusions). There are almost no grammatical errors. There is consistent and accurate use of APA style.

4. Response is structured in a clear and logical manner. Appropriate elements of style are used frequently (e.g., Transition sentences between paragraphs, appropriate headings, organization of response into basic sections such as introduction - main body - conclusions). There are few grammatical errors and APA style is used frequently and with few errors.

3. Some elements of writing style (Strunk & White) are misused, but the overall organization is effective enough to communicate the major points of the response. Ideas are not always expressed clearly. There are many grammatical errors. APA style is used somewhat inconsistently or with several errors.

2. Enough elements of style are missing to affect the readability of the response and the ability of the reader to grade it (substantive points are somewhat clouded by poor organization and lack of clarity in writing). There are a substantial number of grammatical errors and APA style is seldom used or used incorrectly.

1. Organization and clarity are lacking to the point where the reader has a difficult time understanding and grading the response. Grammatical errors and errors in the use of APA style are extremely frequent.

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