Area-specific Qualifying Exam: Oral Examination NACS PHD

The oral exam will constitute Meeting #3 between the candidate and the committee. Unlike a thesis defense, the qualifying exam oral does not begin with a student presentation. The oral, normally 1-2 hours in duration, is instead reserved for questions and answers between the committee and student.† During this time, the candidate will be given an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of the literature, the rationale for the hypotheses, the expected results, the pitfalls of the proposed research, an understanding of alternative approaches to the question and analysis of the results, and an ability to communicate the significance of the findings. At the end of the question period, the candidate will be asked to step out of the room while the committee deliberates. During the deliberation process, each committee member provides an independent judgment of whether the oral component was completed satisfactorily (note: abstention = unsatisfactory). If all, or all but one, agree that the oral was satisfactory, then the student passes the oral component of the exam.

- If the oral is judged as unsatisfactory by two or more members, then the student fails the exam. However, students will be given a second attempt to pass the oral component. The date for the second oral will be negotiated with the student, but it should normally be within 4 weeks of the first oral. The second oral will be based on the written component that has already been deemed satisfactory by the committee.

- If the second oral is judged as unsatisfactory by two or more members, then the student fails the exam. At this time, the student will be asked to leave the program.

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