

Introduction

Before advancing to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have met any deficiencies in his or her background training, must have satisfied all requirements set by his or her major program, must have maintained a minimum average of three grade points per unit in all course work undertaken except those courses graded S or U, and must have passed a Qualifying Examination (including any required tests of a reading knowledge of foreign languages) before a committee appointed to administer that examination. The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination (QE) is to validate that the student is academically qualified to conceptualize a research topic, undertake scholarly research and successfully produce the dissertation required for a doctoral degree. The QE must evaluate the student's command of the field, ensuring that the student has both breadth and depth of knowledge, and must not focus solely on the proposed dissertation research. In addition, the QE provides an opportunity for the committee to provide important guidance to the student regarding his or her chosen research topic. The QE administered to candidates for doctoral degrees is the final step prior to advancement to candidacy; all of the other requirements noted above must be satisfied before the application for the QE is approved. Conversely, the graduate program may not impose any additional requirements other than those specified under Plans A, B or C.

Following the successful completion of the Qualifying Examination, each student should apply for advancement to candidacy for the doctoral degree in a timely manner using the form provided by the Office of Graduate Studies. Once the student has advanced to candidacy, he or she is subject only to the requirements of submitting an acceptable dissertation and passing a final examination (if the program offers the degree under Plan A or Plan C, or if the individual Dissertation Committee requires an examination under Plan B). The graduate program may elect to require an exit seminar under Plan B. However, the program may not impose any additional requirements on the student.

Committee Membership

Qualifying Examination Committees shall include 5 faculty members; normally, at least 3 of the committee members will be members of the student's graduate program including the Chair of the QE committee. QE Committee membership should include at least one member external to the graduate program, and when this is not required by a program, justification must be given during the degree requirement approval process. (The process to request an exception for an external member on the QE Committee is described at the end of this document.) No fewer than four members of the examination committee shall be voting members of the Academic Senate of the University of California (includes Professors, Lecturers with Security of Employment, Professors in Residence and Professors of Clinical “__”), Adjunct Professors or other members of the graduate program faculty recommended by the Graduate Adviser of that program. Normally, only one member may be from categories that include non-Senate faculty, faculty

members from other universities, and scholars from outside academia as specified in the Graduate Council “Guidelines for Service on Advanced Degree Committees” (<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/gcservice.pdf>) unless those individuals are members of the graduate program faculty. The Chair of each committee normally will be a member of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. Requests for exceptions in the case of individual QE committees shall be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies for review and approval.

The graduate program primarily concerned with an examination will be asked to suggest the names of persons to be included on such examining committees, but appointment shall be made by the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will advise all parties concerned. The intended Chair of the Dissertation Committee (commonly known as the Major Professor) may be a member of the QE committee but may not serve as its Chair. The Chair and members of the examination committee should be chosen to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest.

The primary responsibilities of the Chair of the QE are to facilitate the work of the committee and to ensure that the examination is conducted fairly. Prior to the examination, the Chair should meet with the student to discuss scheduling, procedures, format, general content, etc. At the start of the examination, the Chair should attempt to put the student at ease in order that he or she can focus on the content of the examination. The Chair should also ensure that the examination conforms to the approved format and general norms of the program. During the examination, the Chair must ensure that the QE adheres to the expected schedule and that breaks are taken if needed. Following the examination, the Chair should facilitate the discussion among the committee members, ensure that the committee makes every reasonable effort to reach a unanimous conclusion, lead the committee in informing the student of the result and file the committee report with Graduate Studies.

Service on Qualifying Examination committees is a regular responsibility of all full-time faculty. Those who agree to serve are expected to accommodate the interests of the student in scheduling the examination in a timely manner and to participate fully in the process.

Timing

Graduate programs may define a window of time during the program of study that is appropriate for Qualifying Examinations. The examination must be scheduled only after the student has completed all courses and other program degree requirements and early enough to enable the student to advance to candidacy by the end of the 9th quarter of residency (excluding summer terms). However, the QE may be scheduled during a quarter in which the student is taking the final 1 or 2 courses in his or her program of study. If that is the case, the Graduate Adviser must not sign the Advancement to Candidacy form until it can be verified that the student has passed the courses and thereby satisfied all program requirements. The Chair should assist the student in arranging a time, date and place for the examination, and may be consulted on other logistical issues. The student must be registered when taking any portion of the examination.

Process

The Qualifying Examination shall include an oral examination of approximately 2-3 hours in length, with only the student and entire committee present, and the decision-making process immediately following. Non-voting faculty observers may be invited with the unanimous consent of the committee and student. The distinction between breadth and depth may be clarified in a two-part examination. If a written examination is administered earlier as part of the Qualifying Examination, it must be evaluated by the same committee members as the subsequent oral component. Procedures to be followed in the case of unexpected absences of committee members are described in the Graduate Council's "Guidelines for Service on Advanced Degree Committees" (<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/gcservice.pdf>). Under unusual and extenuating circumstances, as determined by the committee, the committee may suspend the qualifying examination in process, and may request that the exam be considered a "No examination". If the committee wishes to make this request, the chair must return the Report on Qualifying Examination form so indicating "No examination", and informing the Dean of Graduate Studies of the reasons.

The breadth component of the QE may be covered in previous written preliminary or field examinations. If a program administers one or more field or preliminary examinations, these are used to provide additional information to the QE committee and do not have to be administered or scored by the QE committee. Committee members may individually meet with the candidate and administer written exams in advance. Any such additional information must be available to all committee members at the time of the oral Qualifying Examination.

The expectation during the QE should be that the student will focus solely on successfully passing a challenging academic examination. Therefore, it is important for programs to remember that Graduate Council policy is that neither the program nor the QE committee shall impose any expectation that the student will provide refreshments during the examination.

Outcome

The members should endeavor to reach a unanimous decision as to the qualifications of the student for successful completion of a doctoral program. They should include in their evaluations of the student such factors as relevant portions of the previous academic record, performance on specific parts of the examination, and an overall evaluation of the student's performance and potential for scholarly research as indicated during the examination.

A committee, having reached a unanimous decision, shall inform the student of its decision as "Pass" (no conditions may be appended to this decision), "Not Pass" (the Chair's report should specify whether the student is required to retake all or part of the examination, list any additional requirements, and state the exact timeline for completion of requirements to achieve a "Pass") or "Fail". If a unanimous decision takes the form of "Not Pass" or "Fail", the Chair of the QE committee must include in its report a specific statement, agreed to by all members of the committee, explaining its decision and must inform the student of its decision. Technically, a unanimous committee is making a recommendation to the Administrative Committee of the Graduate Council; however, the Administrative Committee has delegated authority to make a

decision to a unanimous committee. The decision of a unanimous committee may be changed only for cause, e.g. procedural error or probable bias, or in details of the conditions attached to a "Not Pass" decision. After a second examination, a vote of "Not Pass" is unacceptable; only "Pass" or "Fail" is recognized. Only one retake of the qualifying examination is allowed.

If, after due deliberation, it becomes evident that the committee cannot reach a unanimous decision, the Chair shall inform the student that the committee is divided. Chairs of divided committees shall be especially careful to inform the student that the majority and minority are making recommendations, that the recommendations will be subject to further review, and that the Administrative Committee of the Graduate Council will make the decision as to future action. The Chair shall also notify the Dean of Graduate Studies that the Committee is divided and shall forward to the Dean separate reports from the majority and minority of the committee with their specific evaluations of the student's performance on the examination and recommendations for further action by the Administrative Committee. The Administrative Committee may, at its discretion, request individual statements from members of the examining committee and will consider a written statement from the student if one is submitted. While the deliberations of the examining committee are confidential, student records, such as written reports from committee members, are by law available to the student.

In all cases, the Chair of the examining committee is responsible for reporting the result and supplying other information to the Graduate Council as required by this policy statement. Qualifying Examination reports must be filed within 72 hours of the completion of the examination. In addition, in the case of "Pass" decisions, the Chair of the examining committee is expected to notify the student of the result, and give him/her the signed Application for Advancement to Candidacy. The Dean of Graduate Studies shall inform the student in writing in cases of "Not Pass" or "Fail."

Exception for an External Member on the QE Committee

Graduate Groups/Programs can request a blanket exception to the policy of including an outside member on each student's qualifying examination. The acceptable justification for such a request is that the membership of a large group or program is not dominated by any single Department, but instead draws a super-majority of its members from many different units. The request should include a faculty list sorted by Departmental affiliation. When exceptions are granted, qualifying examination committees should not be drawn from a single Department.

Requests will be reviewed and granted or denied by the Graduate Council's Administrative Committee.